

**The Afterlives of the Algerian War in Contemporary France: Literary Narratives  
and Contested Spaces of Memory**

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# The Afterlives of the Algerian War in Contemporary France: Literary Narratives and Contested Spaces of Memory

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## Abstract

Commemoration of the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962) is increasingly widespread in the public space in contemporary France, but is also the subject of a range of political disputes over representation. Among the large population in France shaped by the conflict and its consequences there are several different groups, each with specific historical narratives and reference points around which memory is mobilized. This thesis analyses a corpus of narratives published between 2002 and 2014 that represent processes of remembrance relating to three of these groups: Harkis – Algerians who served in the French military, *pieds-noirs* – members of the European settler population, and former French conscripts and reservist soldiers.

The aim of this thesis is to assess how these recent literary works mediate memories of the conflict and its lasting consequences in a context of divisions and fractious commemorations in France. The Introduction presents an overview of the research questions of the thesis and the framework for analysis of texts. Chapter 1 establishes the context of the political debates over commemoration during the period in question. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 study each of the three constituencies and focus consistently on the original ways in which texts deal with dynamics of the intergenerational transmission of memory in order to achieve greater clarity on the past. Across all eight works, the conceptualization by authors of approaches towards the mediation of memory also supports new forms of interaction between the different groups. These methods of engagement with legacies of the conflict stand in contrast to many recent physical sites of memory and political initiatives for commemoration in France. By combining textual analysis with the historical and socio-political contextualization of debates over collective memory, this thesis overall examines the ways in which contemporary literary works represent effective ways of negotiating the tensions in France that continue to surround connections to the Algerian War of Independence and colonialism.

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## Introduction: Contested Memories of Colonialism and Conflict

The war in Algeria that lasted from 1954 to 1962 resulted in Algerian independence and the effective end of France's overseas empire.<sup>1</sup> The end of the conflict also had major consequences for the diverse populations of the former colonial territory. In the aftermath of decolonization, recognition and representation of events was problematic in France, even as those transformed by the conflict returned or sought resettlement in the former *métropole*. The starting point for this thesis is the observation that remembrance of the Algerian War remains a divisive subject in contemporary France. Commemoration is carried out by a broad range of groups, each with different perspectives on the events of the conflict and the legacies of colonialism in Algeria. It is in relation to ongoing political arguments over collective memory and a fractious memorial landscape in France that this thesis will analyse contemporary literary narratives that represent afterlives of the Algerian War. This will involve a focus on the ways in which texts conceptualize original approaches to the mediation and transmission of memory. This introduction will firstly outline the disputes that arise over representations of the legacies of the conflict and France's status as a former colonial power, before turning to explain the corpus of texts under consideration and the critical frameworks that will be employed in analysing these works.

Divisions in France surrounding memory of the Algerian War were demonstrated most recently during the 2017 presidential election campaign, when the leading candidates made contrasting statements on details of the conflict. The particular spark for dispute came from the comments made by Emmanuel Macron on the subject of how France should address the subject of its colonial past. During a campaign visit to Algeria in

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<sup>1</sup> In his 1976 study of France's remaining overseas possessions – the *départements d'outre-mer* and *territoires d'outre mer* – Jean-Claude Guillebaud identified the persistence of a colonial mentality in metropolitan France. See Jean-Claude Guillebaud, *Les Confettis de l'Empire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1976).

February 2017, Macron declared that French colonialism was ‘un crime contre l’humanité’ for which France should apologize to the Algerian people.<sup>2</sup> Where he was clear in his criticism of French colonial rule in this instance, Macron in fact contradicted his previous statement on the subject. In an interview given to the French magazine *Le Point* in November 2016, he had argued that while there had been crimes such as the French military’s use of torture during the War of Independence, France was responsible for significant material developments and the growth of the state in Algeria over the course of the period of colonial rule.<sup>3</sup>

The change in tone and adoption of a far more critical view of colonialism by Macron three months later occurred during an interview with Algerian television, in which he reflected on France’s colonial past in Algeria and the importance of reconciliation to contemporary relations between the two nations.<sup>4</sup> Although he was addressing an audience in Algeria, Macron’s comments on the injustices of colonialism prompted an immediate response across the Mediterranean in France. Criticism of Macron was made, in particular, by political opponents on the right and far right, who accused the centrist candidate of denigrating French history and performing ‘repentance’ for colonialism.<sup>5</sup>

For the conservative (*Les Républicains*) candidate François Fillon, Macron’s comments

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<sup>2</sup> ‘En Algérie, Emmanuel Macron qualifie la colonisation française de “crime contre l’humanité”’, *Libération*, 15 February 2017 <[http://www.liberation.fr/elections-presidentielle-legislatives-2017/2017/02/15/en-algerie-emmanuel-macron-qualifie-la-colonisation-francaise-de-crime-contre-l-humanite\\_1548723](http://www.liberation.fr/elections-presidentielle-legislatives-2017/2017/02/15/en-algerie-emmanuel-macron-qualifie-la-colonisation-francaise-de-crime-contre-l-humanite_1548723)> [accessed 7 April 2017].

<sup>3</sup> Mathieu Olivier, ‘France: pour Emmanuel Macron, la colonisation inclut “des éléments de civilisation et des éléments de barbarie”’, *Jeune Afrique*, 24 November 2016 <<http://www.jeuneafrique.com/376888/societe/france-emmanuel-macron/>> [accessed 30 June 2017]. Macron was criticized for the way in which he defended aspects of French colonial rule and relativized details of the use of torture during the War of Independence. The journalist Amrane Medjani, for example, argued that Macron made his comments as part of a campaign strategy to appeal to a right-wing electorate in France. See Amrane Medjani, ‘Non Monsieur Macron, L’Algérie ne doit pas tout à la colonisation’, *Libération*, 4 December 2016 <<http://chroniques-algeriennes.blogs.liberation.fr/2016/12/03/non-monsieur-macron-lalgerie-ne-doit-pas-tout-la-colonisation/>> [accessed 11 July 2017].

<sup>4</sup> ‘En Algérie, Emmanuel Macron qualifie la colonisation française de “crime contre l’humanité”’, *Libération*, 15 February 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Berdah, ‘En Algérie, Macron dénonce la colonisation: “C’est un crime contre l’humanité”’, *Le Figaro*, 15 February 2017. <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/elections/presidentielles/2017/02/15/35003-20170215ARTFIG00260-en-algerie-macron-denonce-la-colonisation-c-est-un-crime-contre-l-humanite.php>> [accessed 7 April 2017].

represented an unacceptable level of apology for France's colonial past.<sup>6</sup> Criticism equally came from the far-right *Front National*, led by Marine Le Pen, for whom Macron was guilty of insulting France.<sup>7</sup> Le Pen, furthermore, reiterated her own perspective on the virtues of French colonialism in Algeria, as well as the material benefits of its civilizing mission, in a campaign interview in April 2017.<sup>8</sup>

The disputes that arose from Macron's comments involved politicians presenting a range of perspectives on the significance of colonialism in Algeria to contemporary society in France. Following this row over the comments he made in Algeria, Macron responded to his political opponents in another interview in France, in which he diagnosed difficulties in engagement with the colonial past: 'La France est aujourd'hui bloquée par les passions tristes de son histoire. Cela nous empêche d'avancer.'<sup>9</sup> Macron did not elaborate further in this instance on what, precisely, would constitute an advance beyond such an obstruction. His presentation of a critical perspective on political dividing lines nonetheless demonstrated an interest in the persistence of tensions and anxieties in France that surround remembrance of colonialism in general and the Algerian War in particular. For the historian Benjamin Stora, Macron's attitude was evidence of the advantage of a generational shift in perspective and distance from events that enables a clearer critical perspective, and demonstrated an intention 'débarrasser la France de ses

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<sup>6</sup> 'La colonisation, "crime contre l'humanité": Macron sous le feu des critiques', *L'Express*, 16 February 2017 <[http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/elections/la-colonisation-crime-contre-l-humanite-macron-sous-le-feu-des-critiques\\_1879756.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/elections/la-colonisation-crime-contre-l-humanite-macron-sous-le-feu-des-critiques_1879756.html)> [accessed 19 April 2017]. Earlier in the presidential election campaign, in August 2016, Fillon had argued for the school curriculum to promote positive elements of France's colonial past. See 'Pour François Fillon, la colonisation visait à "partager sa culture"', *L'Express*, 31 August 2016 <[http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/pour-francois-fillon-la-colonisation-visait-a-partager-sa-culture\\_1825773.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/pour-francois-fillon-la-colonisation-visait-a-partager-sa-culture_1825773.html)> [accessed 3 May 2017].

<sup>7</sup> 'Avec cette déclaration sur la colonisation, Emmanuel Macron fait "honte" à la droite et au FN', *Huffington Post*, 15 February 2017 <<http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2017/02/15/avec-cette-declaration-sur-la-colonisation-emmanuel-macron-fait-honte-droite-fn-algerie/>> [accessed 19 April 2017].

<sup>8</sup> 'Marine Le Pen: "La colonisation a beaucoup apporté, notamment à l'Algérie"', *Libération*, 19 April 2017 <[http://www.liberation.fr/elections-presidentielle-legislatives-2017/2017/04/19/marine-le-pen-la-colonisation-a-beaucoup-apporte-notamment-a-l-algerie\\_1563698](http://www.liberation.fr/elections-presidentielle-legislatives-2017/2017/04/19/marine-le-pen-la-colonisation-a-beaucoup-apporte-notamment-a-l-algerie_1563698)> [accessed 28 April 2017].

<sup>9</sup> 'Colonisation : Emmanuel Macron tente de calmer la polémique', *Le Figaro*, 16 February 2017 <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/elections/presidentielles/2017/02/16/35003-20170216ARTFIG00290-colonisation-emmanuel-macron-tente-de-calmer-la-polemique.php>> [accessed 21 April 2017].



fantômes coloniaux’.<sup>10</sup> A state of impasse in France over remembrance of the Algerian War, five and a half decades after its end, persists due to deep-rooted tensions surrounding the mediation and transmission of memory.

This specific episode involving Macron is an illustrative example for the contention of the present thesis that there is a multiplicity of memories of the Algerian War in contemporary France, but no effective plurality of memory. As will be explored in each of the following chapters, moreover, initiatives for commemoration can also have the effect of reifying divisions between groups with a connection to the conflict and reinforcing political fractures of memory. Stora identifies the existence of multiple memories of events and competing claims to recognition as contributing to the ‘cloisonnement des mémoires’ of the Algerian War and the colonial past in France.<sup>11</sup> It is with reference to this context of conflicting representations of the conflict and its legacies in France that chapters 2, 3 and 4 will analyse the significant mediation of memory performed by recent literary texts. A generational and gendered dynamic is particularly important to the critical perspectives that these works present. Authors drawn from a younger generation in France, all but one of whom are female, represent processes of engagement with legacies of the conflict and conceptualize renewed approaches to the transmission of memory.

The political tensions and fractious debates in contemporary France surrounding commemoration of the Algerian War are shaped by the ways in which reference to the conflict was avoided in the decades prior to 2000. The immediate fallout from the events of the conflict in Algeria led to a range of responses in France. As Raphaëlle Branche

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<sup>10</sup> Simon Blin, ‘Benjamin Stora: “Les enfants d’immigrés ont bien accueilli les propos de Macron sur l’Algérie”’, *Libération*, 16 May 2017, <[http://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/05/16/benjamin-stora-les-enfants-d-immigres-ont-bien-accueilli-les-propos-de-macron-sur-l-algerie\\_1569918?refresh=198387](http://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/05/16/benjamin-stora-les-enfants-d-immigres-ont-bien-accueilli-les-propos-de-macron-sur-l-algerie_1569918?refresh=198387)> [accessed 25 May 2017].

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Stora, *La Guerre des mémoires: La France face à son passé colonial, entretiens avec Thierry Leclère* (Paris: Editions de l’Aube, 2011), p. 16.

outlines, official measures such as the succession of amnesty laws that were passed throughout the 1960s were intended to enforce closure across French society to the subject of the conflict and the nation's colonial past.<sup>12</sup> The legal and political separation from colonial rule in Algeria carried out by the French state is also studied by Todd Shepard, who considers the rewriting of official history that took place around the moment of decolonization.<sup>13</sup> In more recent years, changes in the French state's recognition of the conflict have prompted substantial debate over the legacies of colonialism. A period of greater commemorative activity was signalled by episodes such as the official adoption in France in 1999 of the term 'guerre d'Algérie' to designate the conflict. The law passed in 1999, dealing with pensions for military veterans, broke with the previous official reference to 'opérations' in Algeria.<sup>14</sup> Since this law was passed, however, divisions surrounding commemoration of the conflict have arisen across French society.

The central contention here is that literary texts can mediate memory in ways that physical sites of memory and public forms of commemoration cannot. In discussing the 'afterlives' in France of the Algerian War, analysis is informed by the notion used elsewhere by Kristin Ross in her study of the long-term significance in France of the events of May 1968, in which she argues that 'what has become known as "the events of May '68" cannot now be considered separately from the social memory and forgetting that surround them'.<sup>15</sup> The ongoing legacies of the Algerian War concern a significant

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<sup>12</sup> Raphaëlle Branche, *La Guerre d'Algérie: une histoire apaisée?* (Paris: Seuil, 2005), p. 32. The law passed in 1964, for example, provided an amnesty for crimes committed prior to the ceasefire of 19 March 1962. See 'Loi no 64-1269 du 23 décembre 1964 portant amnistie et autorisant la dispense de certaines incapacités et déchéances', <[https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jo\\_pdf.do?id=JORFTEXT000000875632](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jo_pdf.do?id=JORFTEXT000000875632)> [accessed 6 July 2017].

<sup>13</sup> Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> 'Loi no 99-882 du 18 octobre 1999 relative à la substitution, à l'expression "aux opérations effectuées en Afrique du Nord", de l'expression "à la guerre d'Algérie ou aux combats en Tunisie et au Maroc"', <<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000578132&categorieLien=id>> [accessed 6 July 2017].

<sup>15</sup> Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 1.

population in contemporary France bearing a direct connection to the conflict and the consequences of decolonization since 1962. Jean-Pierre Rioux estimates a population of up to ten million people in France living in 2006 ‘en prise directe avec cette guerre et ce pays’.<sup>16</sup> This population comprises a broad range of groups with varying perspectives on the fallout from events since 1962. In their work on the presence across French society of memories of the conflict, the historians Benjamin Stora and Mohammed Harbi emphasize the importance of attention to the plurality of what they identify as ‘les groupes porteurs de cette mémoire diffuse’.<sup>17</sup> This range includes those who fought for and against Algerian independence, as well as civilians such as the former European settler population and Algerian immigrants to France. The quality of this memory of colonialism and conflict as ‘diffuse’ across a range of constituencies in France, furthermore, is central to the challenge of establishing a consensus over representation of details of the past and of developing an effective plural form of collective remembrance. Three of these constituencies of memory are of particular interest to this thesis, namely Harkis (Algerians who fought on the side of the French during the War of Independence), *pièdes-noirs* (members of the population of European colonial settlers), and French conscript and reservist veterans of the conflict. All three groups have been shaped significantly by policies in France relating to decolonization and the conditions of remembrance of the conflict since 1962.

In addition to these three groups, another major constituency of memory in contemporary France is that which comprises Algerian immigrants to France and their descendants.<sup>18</sup> Extensive scholarship on the cultural identity in France of a population of North African origin, particularly those self-identifying as the *beur* generation, has

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<sup>16</sup> Jean-Pierre Rioux, *La France perd la mémoire* (Paris: Perrin, 2010, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p. 150.

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin Stora and Mohammed Harbi, ‘La guerre d’Algérie: de la mémoire à l’Histoire’, in *La Guerre d’Algérie: 1954–1962, la fin de l’amnésie*, ed. by Benjamin Stora and Mohammed Harbi (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2004), pp. 9–13 (p. 9).

<sup>18</sup> Stora and Harbi, ‘La guerre d’Algérie: de la mémoire à l’Histoire’, p. 9.

focused on issues of belonging explored through literary texts.<sup>19</sup> While these *beur* authors explored questions of belonging in France and adaption following migration from North Africa, younger writers descended from immigrant families have also explored through narrative forms the persistent tensions that surround integration into French society and experiences of widespread racial discrimination.<sup>20</sup> The forms of representation employed by the descendants of post-colonial immigrants in their writing have also addressed the lasting close connections between metropolitan France and its former colonial periphery.<sup>21</sup> In light of recent research on *beur* and post-*beur* writing, including studies by Najib Redouane, Laura Reeck, Ilaria Vitali, and Sylvie Durmelat which have focused on representations of generational dynamics and new approaches to integration in literary works by authors descended from North African immigrant families, the present thesis does not study narratives produced by members of this population in France.<sup>22</sup> It instead addresses three constituencies of memory (Harkis, *pieds-noirs*, and conscript veterans) that are associated, in varying ways, with the defence of colonial rule in Algeria during the War of Independence and considers these groups together for the first time. The specific focus of this study is thus on the status of these three groups in France, as well as the connection between the efforts of individuals to support the transmission of memory

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<sup>19</sup> Authors identified with the *beur* generation who had their debut novels published in France during the 1980s include, among others, Azouz Begag, *Le Gone du Chaâba* (Paris: Seuil, 1986) and Mehdi Charef, *Le thé au harem d'Archy Ahmed* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983). For critical analysis of this generation of authors, see in particular Michel Laronde, *Autour du roman beur: immigration et identité* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993) and Alec G. Hargreaves, *Immigration and Identity in Beur fiction: voices from the North African community in France* (Oxford: Berg, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> See, for example: Faïza Guène, *Kiffe kiffe demain* (Paris: Hachette Littérature, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> On French-Algerian connections, see: Paul A. Silverstein, *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). The distinction between 'post-colonial', which denotes a chronological separation and 'postcolonial', which refers to ongoing connections to the history and culture of empire is usefully defined by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, see: Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, 'Introduction: Situating Francophone Postcolonial Thought', in *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction*, ed. by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (London: Arnold, 2003), pp. 1–14 (p. 3).

<sup>22</sup> *Où en est la littérature "beur"?*, ed. by Najib Redouane (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012), Laura Reeck, *Writerly Identities in Beur Fiction and Beyond* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), *Intrangers (I): Post-migration et nouvelles frontières de la littérature beur*, ed. by Ilaria Vitali (Louvain-la-Neuve, Éditions Académia, 2011), Sylvie Durmelat, *Fictions de l'Intégration: Du mot beur à la politique de la mémoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008).

and the French state's broader recognition of the conflict and engagement with its consequences.

While this thesis therefore does not analyse narratives produced by authors associated with other constituencies of memory, the approach to comparison between groups employed here could well to be expanded to incorporate works such as those by *beur* or *post-beur* authors. The structure of this thesis features a chapter on each of the three constituencies of memory with socio-political contextualization in a discussion of relevant recent memory debates and comparison of texts. Throughout, the focus is on the ways in which texts mediate memory effectively, in ways that other forms cannot, and conceptualize new means of negotiating the past. In addition to analysing works representing other constituencies of memory, a further expansion or development of this methodology would be well served by the adoption of a contrapuntal approach to textual analysis. As proposed by Edward Said in relation to histories of imperialism and experiences of colonial rule, studying texts contrapuntally is a way to 'formulate an alternative both to a politics of blame and to the even more destructive politics of confrontation and hostility.'<sup>23</sup> In relation to the legacies of the Algerian War of Independence in contemporary France, an approach of this sort to the collective memories held by different constituencies would have the merit of challenging both the compartmentalization of memories and perpetuation of dividing lines between groups. In the specific framework of this thesis, however, the focus is on the three groups outlined above and the specific conditions and experiences of each that this Introduction will now set out.

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<sup>23</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 19.

## Constituencies of Memory

The significance for France of the arrival in 1962 of a broad range of groups, each shaped by traumatic experiences relating to the conflict, is summarized by Eric Savarèse in his outline of how ‘l’Algérie indépendante lègue à la société française métropolitaine des populations inédites: les pieds-noirs, les harkis, et les anciens combattants d’une “guerre sans nom”’.<sup>24</sup> The resettlement of these populations in France, moreover, necessitated a response from authorities to the consequences of decolonization that had been brought into the former metropolitan centre. This response was varied for each of the populations in question and also prompted contrasting approaches to the pursuit of recognition from authorities. As Savarèse also argues in identifying and categorizing the population in France bearing connections to colonial Algeria, these groups were not simply shaped by the consequences of Algerian independence but, rather, developed specific positions on their own terms: ‘ils participent à leur propre inscription dans l’espace social.’<sup>25</sup> For each of these populations, the affirmation of a clear place within French society has been carried out most notably through the actions of community associations who pursue recognition from the French state. The political disputes that surround commemoration of the colonial past therefore provide an important context in which to situate analysis of literary narratives and the strategies that they present for the mediation of memory.

The study of Harkis, Algerians who served as auxiliaries in the French military forces during the War of Independence, will focus specifically on those former servicemen who sought resettlement in France after the end of the war. Around half the total number of Harkis fled to France with their families in 1962 as they were faced with a climate of

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<sup>24</sup> Eric Savarèse, *La rencontre postcoloniale* (Bellecombe-en-Bauges: Editions du Croquant, 2014), p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Savarèse, *La rencontre postcoloniale*, p. 14.

violent retribution in post-independence Algeria.<sup>26</sup> These families were housed in camps in remote and peripheral locations in France. As Laura Jeanne Sims studies, a marginal position in French society for Harkis was first indicated by their confinement to such peripheral spaces and persisted through dependence on an administrative system that assigned housing and employment.<sup>27</sup> The camps and forestry settlements that were used by the French authorities to house Harki families in the immediate aftermath of Algerian independence served the emergency needs for resettlement. These sites were, however, also representative of the French state's approach to the management of the Harki population as a post-colonial burden. The policies implemented by the French authorities to manage the housing of Harki families were, notes François-Xavier Hautreux, based on their treatment as a population equivalent to foreign immigrants rather than as French citizens: 'Dans la pratique, c'est la fin de tous les mythes présentant les musulmans d'Algérie comme des Français comme les autres.'<sup>28</sup> A consistent thread across Harki experiences is therefore the sense of exclusion and confinement to the periphery of French society.

The second group is the *pieds-noirs*, members of the population of European colonial settlers in Algeria who fled to France at the end of the conflict. Although both the response of *pieds-noirs* to decolonization and the experience of resettlement were very different from that of Harki families, a condition of exile in France has, as Jo McCormack observes, been central to the perspectives of both communities since

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<sup>26</sup> Abderahmen Moumen, 'La notion d'abandon des harkis par les autorités françaises', in *Les Harkis: Histoire, mémoire et transmission*, ed. by Fatima Besnaci-Lancou, Benoît Falaize and Gilles Manceron (Paris: Éditions de l'Atelier, 2010) pp. 47–62 (p. 59).

<sup>27</sup> Laura Jeanne Sims, 'Rethinking France's "Memory Wars": Harki Collective Memories, 2003–2010', *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 34:3 (2016), 83–104 (p. 85).

<sup>28</sup> François-Xavier Hautreux, 'L'engagement des Harkis (1954–1962): Essai de périodisation', *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 90:2 (2006), 33–45 (p. 41).

1962.<sup>29</sup> The experience of exile for the former colonial settler population of Algeria followed from the transformative experience of displacement in the summer of 1962. For the historian Jean-Jacques Jordi, the term *pied-noir*, as a marker of identity relates to the settlers' uprooting from Algeria at the climax of the war and the conditions of their reception in France: 'Ce n'est pas 1830 qui crée le pied-noir mais les toutes dernières années de guerre, et ce terme sera quasi imposé aux Français d'Algérie par les métropolitains eux-mêmes.'<sup>30</sup> In the decades since 1962, *pieds-noirs* have also often been characterized by attitudes of nostalgia for the former colonial territory and bitterness towards the French state for perceived betrayal at the moment of decolonization that made their position in Algeria untenable. The lasting influence of the trauma of uprooting from Algeria on the intergenerational transmission of memory and attitudes of nostalgia is suggested by Hubert Ripoll in his study of the collective psychology of this population in France: 'Être pied-noir aujourd'hui, c'est partager une culture de l'exode, souvent un manque, quelquefois une souffrance de l'absence de la terre natale.'<sup>31</sup> For the group memory of these former colonial settlers, reference to physical space is therefore crucial.

The third group is that comprising French conscript and reservist veterans of the Algerian War. The requirement for manpower following the French commitment to the conflict meant, as Antoine Prost notes, that 'from 1956 until the end of the war, there were permanently 500,000 young conscript soldiers from France in Algeria'.<sup>32</sup> The primary purpose of their mass deployment was to fulfil French efforts to control territory, in line with the official framing of the conflict as a security issue. Alan Forrest

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<sup>29</sup> Jo McCormack, 'Memory and Exile: Contemporary France and the Algerian War (1954–1962)', in *Exile Cultures, Misplaced Identities*, ed. by Paul Allatson and Jo McCormack (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), pp. 117–38 (p. 118).

<sup>30</sup> Jean-Jacques Jordi, *Les pieds-noirs* (Paris: Le Cavalier Bleu, 2009), p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> Hubert Ripoll, *Mémoire de "là-bas": Une psychanalyse de l'exil* (Paris: Éditions de l'Aube, 2014), p. 46.

<sup>32</sup> Antoine Prost, 'The Algerian War in French Collective Memory', in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 161–76 (p. 163).



also identifies how those serving in Algeria, particularly as conscripts and reservists, were caught up in a course of political events over which they had no control. A condition of alienation of these men therefore resulted from the contrast between their ostensible duty of maintaining colonial rule and the reality of their experiences:

Between 1954 and 1962 more than 2,700,000 young Frenchmen were sent to Algeria in a war that cost some 30,000 French lives, a war in which they felt abandoned and unappreciated by a French public that had little sympathy for the *colons* and remained largely indifferent to the cause of *Algérie française*.<sup>33</sup>

After their return to civilian life in France, one of the many factors that affected these men was the absence of an effective means of expression of their traumatic experiences of conflict.

### **Research context**

In carrying out textual analysis, this thesis will contextualize literary works with reference to the fractious memory debates that took place at the time of their production. This method of analysis will involve a consideration of the ways in which representations of processes of remembrance engage with the conditions of a contested memorial landscape in France. Philip Dine previously presented an approach towards analysis of literary narratives on memory of the Algerian War in his 1994 study of a corpus of texts that represented experiences of the conflict and its aftermath in France. Dine contends that fictionalized narratives served as forms of compensation in France for the lack of public memorialization of the conflict since 1962:

In the continued absence of both a state-sponsored ritual of mourning and a consensual history of the period, those involved in the conflict have looked to

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<sup>33</sup> Alan Forrest, *The Legacy of the French Revolutionary Wars: The Nation in Arms in French Republican Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 236.

writing as a private substitute for the physical *lieux de mémoire* inevitably lost together with French sovereignty over Algeria.<sup>34</sup>

Dine's study was published in 1994, a period when official recognition and commemoration in France of the Algerian War remained limited, and where memorialization remained absent from the public space. A further critical take on France and its relation to its colonial past from an external perspective was presented in 1996 by Anne Donadey, with her assertion that 'in France, the Algerian War has been until recently a rather silenced reality. Such silencing has contributed to the collective forgetting of a war that was never officially recognized as such by the French government'.<sup>35</sup> In this assessment of the state of collective memory of France's colonial past, Donadey borrowed the model first employed by Henry Rousso to assess memory in France of the Vichy Regime and Occupation and diagnose a syndrome that passes through four stages: 'deuil', 'refoulement', 'retour du refoulé', and 'obsession'.<sup>36</sup> In applying this model to memory of the Algerian War, Donadey proposed that 'France is still immersed in the second phase of the syndrome, that of repression'.<sup>37</sup> This was evidenced, for Donadey, by the general absence of commemorations and the effect of amnesia in obstructing efforts to deal with the past. By 1999, for the historian David L. Schalk, the growth of commemorations and official recognition of the conflict indicated that France was gradually coming to terms with the loss of empire and its status as a former colonial power.<sup>38</sup> To progress beyond a condition of repression and achieve

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<sup>34</sup> Philip Dine, *Images of the Algerian War: French Fiction and Film, 1954–1992* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Anne Donadey, "Une certaine idée de la France": The Algeria Syndrome and Struggles over "French" Identity', in *Identity Papers: Contested Nationhood in Twentieth-Century France*, ed. by Steven Ungar and Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 215–32 (p. 216).

<sup>36</sup> Henry Rousso, *Le syndrome de Vichy: de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1990, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p. 19.

<sup>37</sup> Donadey, "Une certaine idée de la France", p. 218.

<sup>38</sup> David L. Schalk, 'Has France's Marrying Her Century Cured the Algerian Syndrome?', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, 25:1 (1999), 149–64 (p. 158).

advances in the work of collective remembrance requires greater clarity on details of a contested past.

Where substantial developments in memorialization since the period of the studies by Donadey and Dine have demonstrated a clear break with the repression of memory of the Algerian War, this has not resulted in consensus on forms of commemoration. The breaking of collective silence in France has indeed been characterized by the multiplication of contrasting accounts and claims to recognition. In a study of debates over commemoration and the incorporation of memory of empire into contemporary society, Emile Chabal contends that: 'Since the late 1990s, the Algerian War has become the pre-eminent site of struggle over the meaning of French imperialism.'<sup>39</sup> This 'struggle', moreover, has involved the engagements of several constituencies of memory seeking a prominent position for their specific historical narrative. A further shift towards open discussion of details of the conflict occurred, for example, in 2000 with the publication of a first-hand Algerian account of the experience of torture at the hands of French forces during the war.<sup>40</sup> This testimony was followed by admissions from Frenchmen involved in torture and a dispute between former officers over justification of the use of repressive measures against Algerian nationalists.<sup>41</sup> The effect of this breaking of silence is summarized by Branche as a rupture with previous conditions in which repression had prevailed: 'L'impression dominante, mise en scène par de

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<sup>39</sup> Emile Chabal, 'Introduction: French Politics in an Age of Uncertainty', in *France since the 1970s: History, Politics and Memory in an Age of Uncertainty*, ed. by Emile Chabal (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 1–22 (p. 11).

<sup>40</sup> A particular spur to fresh debate of the subject of torture came with the publication in June 2000 of an account by the former FLN activist Louissette Ighilahriz of torture suffered during her imprisonment and interrogation by French forces in 1957. This was followed by admissions and efforts at justification from French former officers. On this account, see Florence Beaugé, 'Torturée par l'armée française en Algérie, "Lila" recherche l'homme qui l'a sauvée', *Le Monde*, 20 June 2000, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2000/06/20/torturee-par-l-armee-francaise-en-algerie-lila-recherche-l-homme-qui-l-a-sauvee\\_1671125\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2000/06/20/torturee-par-l-armee-francaise-en-algerie-lila-recherche-l-homme-qui-l-a-sauvee_1671125_3212.html)> [accessed 5 July 2016].

<sup>41</sup> On the debate over torture that followed the account given by Ighilahriz, see Florence Beaugé, 'Comment "Le Monde" a relancé le débat sur la torture en Algérie', *LeMonde.fr*, 17 March 2012 <[http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/03/17/le-monde-relance-le-debat-sur-la-torture-en-algerie\\_1669340\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/03/17/le-monde-relance-le-debat-sur-la-torture-en-algerie_1669340_3212.html)> [accessed 5 July 2016].

nombreux médias, était celle d'un silence général sur la période et d'un dévoilement nécessaire.<sup>42</sup> The opening of official state records and archives in France also signalled a move towards greater openness and engagement with details of the Algerian War and the system of colonial rule. As the historian Sylvie Thénault observes, in addition to access to archives, a generational shift among historians and researchers was significant in bringing about renewed approaches to details of the conflict: 'Il faudrait attendre une nouvelle génération, non marquée par la guerre, pour que s'élabore une approche de l'événement débarrassée de culpabilité.'<sup>43</sup> The research by Thénault on the French legal system during the Algerian War, as well as the work by Branche on the French military's use of torture, enabled a clearer structural understanding of both the actions of the state during the conflict and the policies of official forgetting that were employed in subsequent decades.<sup>44</sup>

While such advances in research and developments in public discussion have indicated a break with a condition of collective repression of memory as borrowed from the model of studies of Vichy, further political debates over commemoration and representation of the conflict have highlighted divisions between a range of parties. In his 2002 study of debates over collective memory in France, Richard Derderian argued that the subject of the Algerian War remained too divisive for commemoration to support plurality due to the range of competing accounts of events: 'It is the continued valence of noninteractive group memories that complicates prospects for achieving a larger consensus of memory.'<sup>45</sup> The persistence up to the present of such a divisive condition also involves varying political mobilizations of the multiple strands of memory relating to the conflict

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<sup>42</sup> Branche, *La guerre d'Algérie: une histoire apaisée?*, p. 50.

<sup>43</sup> Sylvie Thénault, 'Travailler sur la guerre d'indépendance algérienne: Bilan d'une expérience historique', *Afrique & Histoire*, 2:1 (2004), 193–209 (p. 194).

<sup>44</sup> Sylvie Thénault, *Une drôle de justice: les magistrats dans la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: La Découverte, 2004). Raphaëlle Branche, *La torture et l'armée pendant la Guerre d'Algérie: 1954–1962* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001).

<sup>45</sup> Richard L. Derderian, 'Algeria as lieu de memoire: Ethnic Minority Memory and National Identity in Contemporary France', *Radical History Review*, 83 (2002), 28–43 (p. 29).

and its consequences. Tensions therefore form around the historical narratives and representations of details of the past pursued by different groups, at the expense of any effective overlap or exchanges between communities.

Disputes in contemporary France over the representation of legacies of the Algerian War and connections to the colonial past have, in particular, played out repeatedly in battles for the inscription of collective memory in the public space. As Chabal observes, the proliferation of competing accounts of the conflict has ‘been accompanied by a bewildering array of commemorations’ dedicated to varying groups and in a range of locations across France.<sup>46</sup> As Chapter 1 will explore in further detail, moreover, the range of physical memorials also reflects imbalances in representation between constituencies of memory and the contrasting forms of political influence possessed by activist groups and community organizations. Divisions regarding commemoration are also a factor that has informed the diagnoses in recent years of a postcolonial malaise in French society. In their 2005 study of ‘la fracture coloniale’, for example, Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire identify a condition of wide-ranging tensions in French society stemming from connections to the colonial past that remained unresolved. The continued lack of full engagement with colonialism and denial of its significance to contemporary society therefore ‘rend possible et attise la concurrence des mémoires’.<sup>47</sup> Such competition is manifested in the range of commemorative forms that have developed and proliferated.

Tensions concerning collective memory persist in the present in a political climate that supports and enables competition between groups for recognition of different historical narratives. This has the effect, furthermore, of limiting effective engagement in France

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<sup>46</sup> Chabal, ‘Introduction: French Politics in an Age of Uncertainty’, p.11.

<sup>47</sup> Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard and Sandrine Lemaire, ‘La fracture coloniale : une crise française’, in *La fracture coloniale : la société française au prisme de l’héritage colonial*, ed. by Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), pp. 7–31 (p. 15).

with details of the colonial past and understanding of its effects.<sup>48</sup> In their study covering the period up to the fiftieth anniversary of Algerian independence in 2012, Edward Welch and Joseph McGonagle argue that as a result of both hesitancy over official recognition and the lobbying of activist groups, France ‘still struggles to come to terms with the consequences of the war and the period of French history it drew to a close’.<sup>49</sup> As evidenced above by the recent example of the debate that surrounded Macron's comments, obstructions to the development of an effective plural form of collective memory result from the competition for representation between constituencies of memory. In this regard, the framework proposed by Eric Savarèse in 2014 of ‘la rencontre postcoloniale’ is useful for an assessment of the memorial landscape.<sup>50</sup> For Savarèse, memory of the Algerian War in contemporary France is primarily an issue of politics, rather than collective psychology, as developments in commemoration arise from the actions of groups engaged in the pursuit of achievement of prominence: ‘Penser le postcolonial en France, c’est se saisir des mobilisations mémorielles et des processus de construction identitaires.’<sup>51</sup> In setting out analysis of recent literary works in relation to a context of competing accounts and representations, the following section will outline the ways in which texts elaborate alternative approaches to memory and negotiate problematic afterlives of the Algerian War in France.

## Literature and the Mediation of Memory

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<sup>48</sup> In an article reflecting on the row in France provoked by Macron's comments on colonialism in Algeria in February 2017, the journalist Hamidou Anne argued that it highlighted continued limitations in discussion of the full details of the nation's colonial past. See Hamidou Anne, “‘Oui, la colonisation est un crime contre l’humanité’”, *Le Monde*, 17 February 2017 <[http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/02/17/oui-la-colonisation-est-un-crime-contre-l-humanite\\_5081481\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/02/17/oui-la-colonisation-est-un-crime-contre-l-humanite_5081481_3212.html)> [accessed 27 September 2017].

<sup>49</sup> Edward Welch and Joseph McGonagle, *Contesting Views: The Visual Economy of France and Algeria* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Savarèse, *La rencontre postcoloniale*, p. 15.

<sup>51</sup> Savarèse, *La rencontre postcoloniale*, p. 15.

The eight texts under analysis here were published in France between 2002 and 2014. As discussed above, this period saw substantial developments in forms of public memorialization of the Algerian War, as well as significant disputes over representation of details of France's colonial past. In a 2002 update to his study of narratives dealing with memory of the Algerian War, Dine contended at this time that the Algerian War occupied a clear place in public debate in France.<sup>52</sup> Dine had previously identified a French 'failure of historiography' regarding the Algerian War as a reason for the existence of a range of competing accounts of events.<sup>53</sup> According to this diagnosis, developments in engagement with legacies of the conflict would therefore lessen the role of narrative as a compensatory form in the absence of physical memorials. Far from rendering literary representations of memory of the conflict redundant, however, shifts in commemoration and the expansion of a memorial landscape in contemporary France make efforts to mediate and transmit memory effectively all the more significant. While analysis here focuses on texts that relate to the lasting legacies in France of the Algerian War, the extent of engagement with memory of events through contemporary narrative form has elsewhere been questioned. In his 2011 study of literary representations of modern history in France, Nicholas Hewitt contends that while literature has previously provided a medium in which to work through memories and legacies of the Occupation in France, 'there is every indication that the process has a long way to go in the cases of Indochina and Algeria'.<sup>54</sup> Engagement with details of the Algerian War and its afterlives in France would therefore require overcoming continued amnesia in France regarding colonialism. Hewitt also argues that while the wars of decolonization in Indochina and Algeria were events of major significance to French society and were subject to

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<sup>52</sup> Phillip Dine, '(Still) à la recherche de l'Algérie perdue: French Fiction and Film, 1992–2001', *Historical Reflections. Réflexions Historiques*, 28:2 (2002), 255–75 (p. 256).

<sup>53</sup> Dine, *Images of the Algerian War*, p. 236.

<sup>54</sup> Nicholas Hewitt, 'Writing, Memory, and History', in *The Cambridge History of French Literature*, ed. by William Burgwinkle, Nicholas Hammond, and Emma Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 662–70 (p. 669).

substantial political dispute, details of these events remained under-represented in French literature: 'it can hardly be claimed that either conflict has yet been fully absorbed into the national fictional memory.'<sup>55</sup> This lack of effective exploration of details of conflicts and their afterlives in France was, he suggests, due to shortcomings in strategies for representation of the colonial past. It was for this reason that for Hewitt, the Algerian War 'still remains obscured' and in need of further assessment through narrative representation.<sup>56</sup> As the present thesis assesses, however, it is in the period of fractious memory debates and disputes over commemoration in recent years that substantial developments in engagement with remembrance of the Algerian War have taken place through original uses of narrative forms and literary representation. The following section will present a brief survey of several recent narratives that have signalled a significant turn towards interest in the conflict, before outlining the specific corpus of works that this thesis will analyse relating to the three constituencies of memory.

The Algerian War has been the subject of increased interest among writers in France in recent years, with a range of explorations of aspects of the conflict in fictionalized representations. The French author Mathieu Belez, for example, explores both the structural inequalities of the colonial system in Algeria and the experience of *pieds-noirs* after their exodus to France in *C'était notre terre* (2008).<sup>57</sup> Where Belez employs French colonialism in Algeria as a historical reference for his fictional narrative, he also argues for the role of his novels as interventions in debates over memory and a response to persistently limited recognition in France of details of the nation's colonial past: 'c'est un

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<sup>55</sup> Hewitt, 'Writing, Memory, and History', p. 669.

<sup>56</sup> Hewitt, 'Writing, Memory, and History', p. 670.

<sup>57</sup> Mathieu Belez, *C'était notre terre* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008). The publication of *C'était notre terre* was followed by *Les vieux fous* (Paris: Flammarion, 2011) and *Un faux pas dans la vie d'Emma Picard* (Paris: Flammarion, 2015). While each novel is a standalone volume, the three works together form a fictionalized assessment of the history of French colonial settlement and rule in Algeria. See Florent Georgesco, 'Dix ans dans le marigot colonial', *Le Monde*, 22 January 2015, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2015/01/22/dix-ans-dans-le-marigot-colonial\\_4561041\\_3260.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2015/01/22/dix-ans-dans-le-marigot-colonial_4561041_3260.html)> [accessed 11 July 2017].



placard qu'on ne veut toujours pas ouvrir.<sup>58</sup> In addition to Belezi's work focused on the experiences of settlers in Algeria, recent years have also seen a broad range of new assessments of the colonial past and its lasting effects in France. In a survey of novels published in France in the autumn of 2009, the journalist Blaise de Chabali r identified the appearance, in a range of literary works, of new perspectives on memory and legacies of the Algerian War.<sup>59</sup> He cited the examples of the partly autobiographical works set during the War of Independence by the former conscript officer Marc Bressant and the French writer Francine de Martinoir.<sup>60</sup> The conflict also provides a background to the novel *Le Club des incorrigibles optimistes* by Jean-Michel Guenassia, while legacies in contemporary Algeria of violence during the conflict are explored by Anouar Benmalek in *Le Rapt*.<sup>61</sup> All of these novels exploring memories and legacies of the conflict were published in a period in which, as discussed above, memorialization in France was also widespread.

In addition to the cluster of narratives published in 2009, further engagements with details of the Algerian War through literary representation have also been carried out by French authors who have no immediate connection to the conflict or its legacies. Examples of such novels include *Pass  sous silence* by Alice Ferney, which presents a fictionalized account of events surrounding an assassination attempt on Charles de Gaulle in 1962, and *O  j'ai laiss  mon  me* by J r me Ferrari, which deals with the subject

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<sup>58</sup> Nicolas Eth ve, 'Mathieu Belezi,  crivain : "On ne veut pas parler de l'Alg rie coloniale, en France"', 21 January 2011, <<http://www.mediaterranee.com/2112011-mathieu-belezi-ne-veut-pas-parler-de-lalgerie-coloniale-en-france.html>> [accessed 11 July 2017].

<sup>59</sup> Blaise de Chabali r, 'Quand l'Alg rie nourrit les romanciers', *Le Figaro*, 17 September 2009, <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/livres/2009/09/17/03005-20090917ARTFIG00416-quand-l-algerienourrit-lesromanciers-.php>> [accessed 13 January 2017].

<sup>60</sup> Marc Bressant, *La Citerne* (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 2009). Francine de Martinoir, *L'aim  de juillet* (Arles: Editions Jacqueline Chambon, 2009).

<sup>61</sup> Jean-Michel Guenassia, *Le Club des incorrigibles optimistes* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2009). Anouar Benmalek, *Le Rapt* (Paris: Fayard, 2009). de Chabali r, 'Quand l'Alg rie nourrit les romanciers', *Le Figaro*, 17 September 2009.

of the French military's use of torture against Algerian nationalist prisoners.<sup>62</sup> The employment of reference to the conflict as background and historical context for literary invention in this way demonstrates a greater normalization of remembrance and engagement with details of a contested past.<sup>63</sup> The publication of these narratives taking a historical interest in details of the Algerian War was followed in 2011 by the novel *L'art français de la guerre* by Alexis Jenni.<sup>64</sup> Through its representation of the narrator's conversations with a veteran of France's wars of decolonization, Jenni's novel gives a commentary on traces of the colonial past that persist and provoke tensions in contemporary French society.<sup>65</sup> It also stands in contrast to the condition identified by Hewitt of a lack of literary representations of events and their afterlives.

The above survey of literary works dealing with aspects of the Algerian War of Independence published in France in recent years demonstrates the growth of explorations of the conflict through narrative form. In a 2012 interview, the literary critic Antoine Compagnon identified a broader trend in contemporary French literature of approaches to the memory of conflict: 'On assiste au retour romanesque d'une réalité conflictuelle de la France, une réalité taboue, longtemps interdite de parole.'<sup>66</sup> For Compagnon, who cites as examples the works by Ferney, Ferrari and Jenni, new engagements with aspects of a contentious and unresolved past is provided by authors

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<sup>62</sup> Alice Ferney, *Passé sous silence* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2010). Jérôme Ferrari, *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2010).

<sup>63</sup> On the novels by Ferney and Ferrari, see Emmanuel Hecht, 'Quand la guerre d'Algérie inspire les écrivains', *L'Express*, 1 September 2010, <[http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/quand-la-guerre-d-algerie-inspire-les-ecrivains\\_916116.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/quand-la-guerre-d-algerie-inspire-les-ecrivains_916116.html)> [accessed 13 February 2017].

<sup>64</sup> Alexis Jenni, *L'art français de la guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011). Jenni's novel was awarded the *prix Goncourt* — France's most prestigious literary prize — in 2011. Alexis Jenni remporte le Goncourt, *Le Monde*, 2 November 2011, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2011/11/02/alexis-jenni-remporte-le-goncourt\\_1597323\\_3260.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2011/11/02/alexis-jenni-remporte-le-goncourt_1597323_3260.html)> [accessed 2 February 2017].

<sup>65</sup> Mustapha Harzoune, 'Alexis Jenni, *L'art français de la guerre*', *Hommes et migrations*, 1294 (2011), 145–6. Jenni's novel was also reviewed as a meditation on under-examined details of France's colonial past, with his fictional narrative form serving as a mode of access to traces of recent history, see Patrick Rambaud, "'L'art français de la guerre", d'Alexis Jenni: le sale parfum des colonies', *Le Monde*, 18 August 2011, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2011/08/18/le-sale-parfum-des-colonies\\_1560736\\_3260.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2011/08/18/le-sale-parfum-des-colonies_1560736_3260.html)> [accessed 7 February 2017].

<sup>66</sup> Florence Colombani, "'Non, la littérature n'est pas en danger'", *Le Point*, 16 August 2012, <[http://www.lepoint.fr/grands-entretiens/non-la-litterature-n-est-pas-en-danger-16-08-2012-1497348\\_326.php](http://www.lepoint.fr/grands-entretiens/non-la-litterature-n-est-pas-en-danger-16-08-2012-1497348_326.php)> [accessed 13 January 2017].

who possess a distanced perspective on the events in question. The significance of a generational shift as a factor influencing new perspectives on the conflict and its legacies, on the fiftieth anniversary of its end, is also noted by Stora: ‘Sur le retour de la guerre d’Algérie dans la société française d’aujourd’hui, un élément toutefois domine, le passage des générations.’<sup>67</sup> In a period of increased memorialization and multiple forms of representation, Stora identifies authors including Ferrari as ‘nouveaux acteurs de mémoire’, who present original approaches towards dealing with traces of the past.<sup>68</sup> The common interest across these works in clarifying details of the past also exemplifies the values of literature, as proposed by Compagnon, as a medium for critical reflection and guidance: ‘la littérature est un instrument de connaissance du monde; elle sensibilise aux questions de l’identité et de la différence.’<sup>69</sup> While the novels mentioned above offer original representations of individual experiences of the Algerian War and the lasting consequences of decolonization for France, they fall outside the remit of this thesis, which focuses specifically on texts produced by authors with a personal or familial connection to the conflict and its afterlives. The eight texts under analysis here portray individuals belonging to specific constituencies of memory yet engage with the existence of a plurality of perspectives in France. As they make use of generational dynamics of the transmission of memory they also conceptualize significant methods to challenge persistent divisions and silences in the present.

Investigations by female narrators into family history are central to each of the three texts dealing with Harki experiences: *Mon père, ce Harki* by Dalila Kerchouche, *Fille de*

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<sup>67</sup> Benjamin Stora, ‘Algérie-France, mémoires sous tension’, *Le Monde*, 18 March 2012, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/03/18/algerie-france-memoires-sous-tension\\_1669417\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/03/18/algerie-france-memoires-sous-tension_1669417_3212.html)> [accessed 8 December 2017]. The importance of a generational shift to the development of new perspectives on memory of the Algerian War in politics, as well as cultural production has also been emphasised by Jo McCormack. See: Jo McCormack, ‘Social Memories in (Post) colonial France: Remembering the Algerian War in the Franco-Algerian War’, *Journal of Social History*, 44:1 (2011), 1129–38.

<sup>68</sup> Stora, ‘Algérie-France, mémoires sous tension’

<sup>69</sup> Colombani, “Non, la littérature n’est pas en danger”.

*Harki* by Fatima Besnaci-Lancou, and *Moze* by Zahia Rahmani. All three were published in France in 2003 and are written by authors who are the daughters of Harkis subject to resettlement from Algeria after the end of the War of Independence. Their focus on intergenerational relations and establishing a clear transmission of memory involves acting to break the long-term silences of fathers and mothers. In each work, narrators portray processes of developing a critical voice and speaking on behalf of their parents, while also assessing their own experiences of marginality in French society. The system of camps and forestry settlements in which Harkis were housed is particularly important to the work by Dalila Kerchouche, in which the author retraces the itinerary of her family through a succession of sites across France. The text by Besnaci-Lancou is a memoir of a childhood shaped by uprooting from Algeria and resettlement in France. Her subsequent successful integration into French society equally informs her reflections on the conditions experienced by Harkis since 1962. Zahia Rahmani's novel also involves aspects of autobiography and presents a fictionalized investigation into the conditions that led to the suicide of the narrator's Harki father after decades in France. While all three narrators are concerned with piecing together details of their family history, they also consistently set the experiences of their parents and relatives in a broader context. The critical perspectives of female narrators of a younger generation are also crucial to the examinations of *pied-noir* memory in *La solitude de la fleur blanche* (2009) by Annelise Roux and *Trois jours à Oran* (2014) by Anne Plantagenet. In both texts, narrators identify significant connections between memory and spatiality as they examine details of the experiences of previous generations rooted in Algeria. Roux's narrator reflects on an inherited connection to Algeria and the ties to physical space that she must negotiate. In this work, as well as in Plantagenet's text, the examination of the experiences of former settlers and lasting attachments to physical locations prompts broader questioning of the continually strong connections in France between expressions of *pied-noir* memory and

the emotion of nostalgia. In her text, Plantagenet adopts the form of a travelogue as she presents the account of a journey to Algeria with her father in search of the former family home. In contrast to Roux's introspective style, the narrator performs an investigatory role and encourages her father to break his silence and engage with connections to the past. The reconciliatory encounters that take place between former and present inhabitants in the locations they visit, furthermore, lead to the development of a plural memory of the colonial past in Algeria founded on shared references to physical space.

The three texts dealing with memories of former French conscripts and reservist veterans each portray processes of the breaking of silence on the conflict around four decades after the events. In *Des hommes* (2009) by Laurent Mauvignier, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnoul* (2012) by Claire Tencin and *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes...* (2002) by Maïssa Bey, individual veterans consider the avoidance of the subject of the conflict in French society and the conditions in which they have long felt confined to silence. In each case, a release from repression results from the emergence of new means for the transmission of memory. The narrator of Mauvignier's novel is a conscript veteran who struggles to negotiate the resurgence of traumatic memories following an episode in the present that brings long-repressed tensions to the surface. The transmission of memory through a process of bearing witness is the central interest of the narrator of Tencin's novel, who is the daughter of a former reservist serviceman in Algeria. In both of these texts, the French veteran is portrayed coming to terms with the long-term effects of repression and internalization of memory. In the narrative by Bey, which takes the form of a staged dialogue, the encounter between individuals representing different constituencies of memory leads to a shared effort to address precise details of the conflict that have long been subject to silence.

As well as a generational dynamic, gender is particularly significant to the profile of narrators of the texts under analysis here. Younger, female individuals are consistently represented performing leading roles in investigating the long-term silences or persistently reluctant expression of fathers affected by experiences of conflict. As they present striking contrasts to the subjects of their inquiries, the factor of their gender combines with generational distance and the mobility they possess. The emergence of these female voices therefore enables advances in the negotiation of afterlives of the Algerian War. The critical perspectives of these daughter-narrators present particularly effective challenges to the long-term repression of memory, as well as a persistently marginal status that they identify as part of their inheritance from previous generations. While female voices are therefore prominent and crucial to the mediation of memory for all three constituencies, textual analysis in this thesis does not engage extensively with the field of gender studies or notions of the liberating quality of a specifically ‘feminine’ form of writing focused on the body particularly when writing history.<sup>70</sup> It instead focuses on generation as the central factor that shapes the transmission of memory. The motivation of each of these narrators to pursue their investigations notably stems from their own experiences of the manifestations of traumatic legacies within families and domestic environments in France. Rather than focusing exclusively on the self, therefore, the narrators of several of these texts perform crucial roles of communicating and working in co-operation with others in order to uncover and clarify details of the past that remain unresolved. As they work outwards from personal anxieties, they act in a manner of which they find previous generations incapable and seek to establish conditions for effective exchange and dialogue. As the following section will outline with attention to the fields of memory studies and Francophone Postcolonial Studies, the role of literary

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<sup>70</sup> See, for example, Hélène Cixous and Cathérine Clement, *La jeune née* (Paris: Union Générale d’Éditions, 1975). On a ‘feminine’ approach to the writing of colonial history, see Kate Marsh, *Fictions of 1947: Representations of Indian Decolonization 1919–1962* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 171–2.

texts in treating afterlives of Algeria in contemporary France centres on their strategies for bringing individual memories to greater prominence and establishing new connections in a context of continual tension surrounding engagement with the colonial past in the public domain.

### **Critical and theoretical framework**

Analysis of contemporary literary works will be carried out with reference to ongoing memory debates and political disputes over commemoration. This will involve a substantial assessment of the conditions in which competition for recognition takes place between a range of actors with contrasting interests. The narrators of the texts in question present approaches to the mediation and transmission of memory that are very different in their aims from those of memory activists. In a study of the ways in which contentious memories of the Algerian War have been mobilized in France, Natalya Vince observes how fractious debates over commemoration and public representation of the conflict ‘are driven by an activist minority, split into a wide range of political allegiances with specific memorial axes to grind’.<sup>71</sup> The pursuit of claims concerning specific constituencies of memory also leads to further fragmentation. The strategies of remembrance and mediation that the texts under analysis here pursue have appeared in a period marked by the competitive conditions of what Chabal defines as ‘postcolonial identity politics’ in France, in which the assertion of group identity and belonging is the central concern of actors engaged in debates.<sup>72</sup> By way of contrast with these political engagements, literary texts are not inclined to repeat well-established grievances relating to afterlives of the Algerian War. Instead, authors are primarily interested in establishing clear connections to memory of the conflict that would enable more effective negotiation

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<sup>71</sup> Natalya Vince, ‘Questioning the Colonial Fracture: The Algerian War as a “useful past” in contemporary France and Algeria’, in *France and the Mediterranean: International Relations, Culture and Politics*, ed. by Emmanuel Godin and Natalya Vince (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), pp. 305–43 (p. 329).

<sup>72</sup> Emile Chabal, ‘From the banlieue to the burkini: the many lives of French Republicanism’, *Modern & Contemporary France*, 35:1 (2017), 68–74 (p. 71).

of the lasting consequences of events in France. With a consistent focus on assessing the value of the forms of mediation of memory that are presented by authors, analysis of all of the selected works will also engage with the contention advanced by Jane Hiddleston regarding the capacity of literary form to provoke renewed ways of thinking: ‘formal and generic experimentation are a crucial part of literature’s capacity to reflect back on its context in surprising and challenging ways.’<sup>73</sup> The overall interest of textual analysis is therefore in identifying and examining what contemporary texts do to transmit and mediate memory more effectively than other forms, in particular public commemorations in contemporary France.

Theories of collective memory are significant to evaluations of the approaches towards interpreting and negotiating the past that contemporary literary works present. In particular, the foundational reference of Maurice Halbwachs in the field of memory studies is instructive for an outline of how all processes of remembering are social acts that reinforce belonging to a group. The details of the past that are recalled as part of group belonging, Halbwachs argued, are always informed by contemporary conditions: ‘the past is a social construction mainly, if not wholly, shaped by the concerns of the present.’<sup>74</sup> Representations of the past that are constructed by specific groups can therefore provide shared references and serve a purpose of defining difference from others. In the context of memory debates relevant to the present thesis, the distinction between ‘social’ and ‘collective’ memory proposed by Geoffrey Cubitt is also useful for an assessment of the constructed nature of memories and the ways in which they are adapted to suit specific ends:

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<sup>73</sup> Jane Hiddleston, ‘Introduction’, in *Postcolonial Poetics: Genre and Form*, ed. by Patrick Crowley and Jane Hiddleston (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), p. 1–9 (pp. 2–3).

<sup>74</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 25.



To evoke a collective past is always to annexe earlier experiences to a present social conception, and the language of collective memory tends to obscure the extent to which the perceived relevance of such a past to today's social identities must always be an imaginative or ideological construction.<sup>75</sup>

Where remembrance of the Algerian War is subject to continual shifts in France that are driven by political interests and concerns in the present, the effects of reification of divisions brought about by physical sites of memory that seek to frame collective memory are particularly significant. As Cubitt also explains: 'groups may be considered both as forms for the production and reproduction of shared knowledge pertaining to the past of the collectivity, and as environments that condition the ways in which individuals remember.'<sup>76</sup> Analysis in this thesis of the original strategies of remembrance that are developed in the corpus of recent texts will consider the uses to which memory is put by narrators in order to obtain clarity on the past.

In all of the texts under analysis here, the individuals portrayed question the forms of collective memory that anchor belonging to a group or community. An analysis of the culture of collective remembrance is presented by Henry Rousso in his recent study of widespread public commemoration in contemporary France, in which he proposes that memory has become central to the affirmation of collective identities: 'Elle donne lieu à de nouvelles formes de revendications sociales et de politiques publiques.'<sup>77</sup> In the specific context of remembrance of the Algerian War of Independence in contemporary France, continual developments and updates to existing forms of commemoration result in a sense of persistent incompleteness and uncertainty over common reference points.

The effect of this condition and the importance acquired by group memory is the further division of a memorial landscape. Groups that claim advocacy of the collective memory

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<sup>75</sup> Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 17.

<sup>76</sup> Cubitt, *History and Memory*, p. 133.

<sup>77</sup> Henry Rousso, *Face au passé: Essais sur la mémoire contemporaine* (Paris: Editions Belin, 2016), p. 10.

of a specific population or constituency express possession of what Robert Gildea has termed 'political culture', defined as 'the culture elaborated by communities competing for political power to define themselves against competing communities, to bind together their members, to legitimate their claim to power'.<sup>78</sup> In relation to memory of the Algerian War, competition between interest groups leads to the proliferation of forms of representation summarized more recently by Savarèse as the political conditions of 'la rencontre postcoloniale'. Where the contemporary climate of the politics of commemoration of the Algerian War therefore inhibits productive connections between groups or the development of shared memories of Algeria, there are nonetheless forms of interaction, and indeed interdependence, between groups. The similarities in approaches among competing actors was also noted by Branche:

Tout en s'attachant à faire connaître leur passé ou à maintenir vivantes les sources de leur identité, les différents groupes porteurs de mémoire à l'origine des résurgences de la guerre d'Algérie dans le paysage public français ont en commun une posture accusatrice. Ils dénoncent, s'indignent ou s'émeuvent d'une méconnaissance de leur histoire. Et, comme en réponse, ils diffusent leur propre interprétation des événements qui les ont touchés.<sup>79</sup>

As the following chapters will examine with reference to case studies of physical sites of memory, the proliferation of a broad range of forms of commemoration in the public sphere results in a lack of coherence over collective remembrance or an effective plurality of memories.

The present focus on a competitive and politically fraught memorial landscape in contemporary France relating to the Algerian War of Independence also draws on theories of the representation of collective memories. In this field concerning social

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<sup>78</sup> Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> Branche, *La guerre d'Algérie: une histoire apaisée?*, p. 55.

memory and symbolic references for connection to the past, Pierre Nora's conceptualization of 'lieux de mémoire' provides, alongside Halbwachs, a significant reference point. For Nora, the particular identification of 'les lieux où se cristallise et se réfugie la mémoire' can serve as compensatory measures for the condition he identifies of a weakening of clear national or collective positions on the past.<sup>80</sup> As common references, 'lieux de mémoire' therefore draw together members of a community and provide bases for collective identity. As discussed throughout this thesis, competition between groups representing constituencies of memory is manifested in disputes over public visibility and the pursuit of specific 'lieux'. More recently, in response to what he identifies as competing memories and narratives of victimization in the public sphere engaged in 'a zero-sum struggle for pre-eminence', Michael Rothberg proposes the quality of 'multidirectionality' of memory.<sup>81</sup> This involves a comparative approach that emphasises the transfers and exchanges that occur between groups in order to de-fuse competition among varying claims to recognition. This focus on challenging the compartmentalization of memories and their tying to boundaries of group belonging or exclusive identities is shared by Max Silverman in his concept of 'palimpsestic' memory. For Silverman, this model provides a way of assessing memory 'as a hybrid and dynamic process across individuals and communities'.<sup>82</sup> In their challenges to a politicized structure of competing memories, both critics present models that focus on comparative forms and transcultural connections. In contrast to these broad approaches, however, the present thesis is concerned with the specific tensions that surround the legacies of the Algerian War in France and the persistent divisions between population groups that share overall common reference points for collective memory. All of the constituencies

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<sup>80</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Entre Mémoire et Histoire: La problématique des lieux', in *Les Lieux de Mémoire I: La République*, ed. by Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp. xvii–xlii (p. xvii).

<sup>81</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), p. 5.

in question, moreover, are shaped by events stemming from France's process of decolonization. As textual analysis will demonstrate, challenging the dividing lines that are enforced by the politics of memory involves exploring existing overlaps and grounds for solidarities between communities in France. The focus here is thus on the practical strategies that texts employ to make productive use of memory in the present and their contribution to the development of a plural, shared frame of reference relating to the afterlives of the conflict.

The ways in which each of the texts under analysis establish means for recovering and examining memories reflect their engagement with the persistent dividing lines between groups in France. In relation to imbalances in public representation, Rothberg's model of 'knotted' memories is more useful than a 'multidirectional' or 'palimpsestic' form.<sup>83</sup> In the specific context of the socio-political afterlives of Algeria and colonialism in France studied here, points of contact and exchange between groups are crucial to the development of a comparative and more open model of memory. Instead of remaining tied to the restrictive framework of a singular group narrative, the process of broadening perspectives and establishing new connections that individual narrators represent are crucial to their advances. Beyond their concerns to clarify details of the past concerning personal or familial status and establish means for the clear transmission of memory, the narrators of the texts notably explore shared connections with other constituencies of memory as an essential stage of understanding their position in contemporary France. As they work from the basis of their distance from the events in question and possess clear, critical perspectives, these narrators consistently question restrictive ties of group memory and belonging. The way in which they conceptualize new methods of dealing with legacies of colonialism and the Algerian War is also significant to the overall focus

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<sup>83</sup> Michael Rothberg, 'Between Memory and Memory: From Lieux de mémoire to Nœuds de mémoire', *Yale French Studies*, No. 118/119, Nœuds de mémoire: Multidirectional Memory in Postwar French and Francophone Culture (2010), 3–12 (p. 7).

of this thesis on the role of literary narratives in the field of Francophone Postcolonial Studies which, as defined by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, aims ‘to underline the complex, intertwined nature of the relationship between the former empire and its former colonies’.<sup>84</sup> The study will therefore consider what, precisely, texts can do to support a plurality of memories in contemporary society that physical sites of memory and political initiatives for commemoration cannot. The proposal by Astrid Erll for literature as a distinctive form for the conceptualization of new reference points and approaches to memory also informs the approach of the present thesis towards texts set in contrast to physical sites of memory:

Literature fills a niche in memory culture, because like arguably no other symbol system, it is characterized by its ability – and indeed tendency – to refer to the forgotten and repressed as well as the unnoticed, unconscious, and unintentional aspects of our dealings with the past.<sup>85</sup>

All of the original perspectives that are presented here aim to recover memories and shed new light on lived experiences of the conflict and its aftermath in order to negotiate these afterlives more effectively. It is therefore not a matter of closing the subject definitively but rather of questioning the conditions in which the segmentation of memory and a lack of clarity have prevailed.

## **Thesis Structure**

The first chapter will present an historical contextualization of memory debates and political disputes over commemoration in France between 2002 and 2014, the period in which the texts in question were published. By paying close attention to ways in which

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<sup>84</sup> Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, ‘Introduction: Situating Francophone Postcolonial Thought’, in *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World*, ed. by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), pp. 1–28 (p. 4).

<sup>85</sup> Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans by Sarah B. Young (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p. 153.

memory of aspects of the conflict and the fallout from decolonization have been subject to political mobilizations, this chapter will build on the contention that recent initiatives for commemoration have often had the effect of reifying divisions between constituencies of memory and reinforcing a situation of competition between groups for recognition and prominence in the public sphere in France. This overview of contemporary debates will also provide the basis and context for subsequent development of the argument regarding the critical value of recent literary texts, and the original strategies for the transmission and mediation of memory that they present. The three main chapters will focus, in turn, on each of the constituencies of memory. In chapter 2, which focuses on Harki memory, analysis of the narratives by three female authors born to families who fled Algeria for France will assess, in particular, the representations of experiences in peripheral environments in France. Connections between memory and spatiality are also significant to chapter 3, on *pied-noir* memory. Analysis of the texts by Roux and Plantagenet will consider the ways in which representations of continually strong connections to former colonial territory in Algeria serve as the basis for critical questioning of attitudes of nostalgia and reactions against the consequences of decolonization for former settlers. Chapter 4, on representations of French former conscripts and reservists, will assess literary representations of the experiences of participants in the conflict in the decades that followed events and a generalized condition in France of the repression of memory of events. Where forms of commemoration and the inscription of memory of the Algerian War into the public space have continued to provoke political battles over representation, literary works produced in the same period present, by contrast, significant approaches to negotiating the afterlives of the conflict and interpreting lasting and often unresolved connections to colonialism.

## Chapter 1: Memory Wars in France 2002–14

This chapter presents a historical contextualization of debates in contemporary France surrounding memories of the Algerian War of Independence. It focuses specifically on political developments between 2002 and 2014, the period in which the texts under analysis in this thesis were produced and published. This period featured significant increases in commemoration of the Algerian War, both through state-led initiatives and at local levels, but also saw divisions between constituencies of memory in France. The aim is to examine the persistence of disputes surrounding public representation of France's colonial past in Algeria and to outline the conditions in which contemporary literary works support the transmission and mediation of memory. The period in question spans three different presidencies — those of Jacques Chirac, Nicolas Sarkozy, and François Hollande — as well as shifts in parliamentary majorities between the centre right and centre left. The first section will focus on memorialization at a national level in France and top-down measures for commemoration. Following this survey of political initiatives, the second section will examine how each of the three constituencies of memory — Harkis, *pieds-noirs* and former conscript veterans — have mobilized themselves politically and established representation in memory debates. Through the study of a range of examples, this contextualization chapter will therefore expand upon the contention of this thesis that recent physical sites of memory in France relating to the conflict have largely had the effect of reifying existing divisions between groups. These developments have taken place at the expense of an effective plural framework for collective memory and full engagement with the significant afterlives of colonialism in French society. The mediating role performed by literary texts that conceptualize renewed approaches to memory and means of examining a continually contested past is therefore crucial.

As outlined in the Introduction, competing claims to representation and fractious debates in France have been particularly intense since the official recognition of the Algerian War of Independence in 1999. The period that followed the passing of this law was characterized by what Stora terms the ‘acceleration’ of memory across French society.<sup>86</sup> In addition to the proliferation of a range of contrasting physical sites of memory, this ‘acceleration’ has also fed into the situation of the ‘guerre des mémoires’ over colonialism identified by Stora.<sup>87</sup> This ‘guerre’ is fought in battles for prominence of public representation and official recognition from the French state. This study of memorialization also pays attention to the effects of what Johann Michel terms ‘inflation mémorielle’ in contemporary France.<sup>88</sup> In addition to physical memorials, this ‘inflation’ has been driven by legislative measures aimed at establishing definitive positions on collective memory. Policies on memorialization are employed, Michel argues, with the aim of transforming ‘les représentations communes du passé d’une société donnée’.<sup>89</sup> In this political climate, the actions of groups engaged in exclusively furthering the interests of specific constituencies of memory are significant. Memory activist groups both contribute to, and are shaped by, what Savarèse identifies as ‘la nouvelle configuration créée par la rencontre postcoloniale’.<sup>90</sup> While this ‘rencontre’ between contrasting interest groups has brought debate over France’s colonial past firmly into the public sphere in the period that this survey covers, it is the contention of this thesis that it has also produced further fragmentation as memory activists compete for prominence and political influence.

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<sup>86</sup> Benjamin Stora, ‘1999—2003, guerre d’Algérie, les accélérations de la mémoire’, in *La Guerre d’Algérie: 1954-1962, la fin de l’amnésie*, ed. by Benjamin Stora and Mohammed Harbi (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2004), pp. 501–514 (p. 507).

<sup>87</sup> Stora, *La guerre des mémoires*, p. 7.

<sup>88</sup> Johann Michel, *Gouverner les mémoires: Les politiques mémorielles en France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010), p.1.

<sup>89</sup> Michel, *Gouverner les mémoires*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>90</sup> Savarèse, *La rencontre postcoloniale*, p. 105.



## Contested Memory in France, 2002–14: Linearity or Circularity?

This section focuses on state-led measures in France governing recognition of the Algerian War and the political struggles that have taken place in recent years over the definition and framing of collective remembrance of the conflict. The centrality of government policies in determining positions on collective memory is emphasized by Timothy Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper in their study of commemoration: ‘The term “official memory” refers to those dominant or hegemonic narratives which underpin and help to organize the remembrance and commemoration of war at the level of the nation-state.’<sup>91</sup> The position of the state regarding the recognition and representation of details of the past is therefore significant for all forms of collective remembrance in society. The definition of such a position, however, can also be a strongly contested matter. The particular intensity with which details of official memory of the Algerian War have been fought over in France in recent years has been driven by politics and competing interests. In his study of contemporary debates over memory in society, Henry Rousso observes how, following its emergence and stimulus for prominent public and political representation, the subject of the legacies of French colonialism has become focused on issues of group belonging: ‘la question de la mémoire coloniale ou postcoloniale en France est passée d’un débat intellectuel et moral, dans les années 2000, à un marqueur des identités politiques et sociales.’<sup>92</sup> In the period between 2002 and 2014, moreover, fluctuations in political influences and electoral interests that inform policies on commemoration have resulted in a wide range of engagements with colonial legacies.

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<sup>91</sup> T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper, ‘The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics’, in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, ed. by T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 3–85 (p. 22).

<sup>92</sup> Rousso, *Face au passé: Essais sur la mémoire contemporaine*, p. 121.

This survey of a contested memorial landscape assesses the range of state-led forms of commemoration across the period in question. In their 2005 diagnosis of France's 'fracture coloniale', Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard and Sandrine Lemaire identify how political involvement in commemoration 'se déploie selon deux axes: l'édification d'espaces dédiés à la mémoire coloniale; et des déclarations officielles et des textes de loi qui tendent à produire une vision normative de l'histoire coloniale'.<sup>93</sup> In examining relevant examples of policies supporting specific, partial historical narratives, this chapter also considers the ways in which electoral interests have informed positions on commemoration, at the expense of means of engaging effectively with afterlives of colonialism and settling persistent tensions relating to the conflict in Algeria. The concept of 'régime mémoriel' proposed by Michel to designate the public discourses on memory in a given period is particularly useful in this context.<sup>94</sup> For Michel, the position of a 'régime' is manifested in the range of practices and forms employed to define and govern collective memory. While official engagement with details of the conflict and the actions of the French state has grown significantly in the past two decades, changes have also been largely driven by interests tied to party political lines. In their recent study of the ways in which memories of colonialism and the Algerian War have been mobilized politically, Jérôme Fourquet and Nicolas Lebourg note how dealing with the consequences of France's loss of its status as a colonial power has been a particularly acute yet unresolved issue for the right: 'la question de l'Algérie hante spécifiquement les droites françaises'.<sup>95</sup> As this survey will consider in assessing policies introduced during the presidencies of Chirac and Sarkozy, limited engagement with the implications of France's loss of empire has shaped commemorations and exacerbated tensions surrounding collective memory. Such policies stand in contrast, furthermore, to the

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<sup>93</sup> Bancel, Blanchard, Lemaire, 'La fracture coloniale: une crise française', p. 17.

<sup>94</sup> Michel, *Gouverner les mémoires*, p. 16.

<sup>95</sup> Jérôme Fourquet and Nicolas Lebourg, *La nouvelle guerre d'Algérie n'aura pas lieu* (Paris: Éditions Fondation Jean Jaurès, 2017), p. 8.

forms of commemoration that have been broadly supported by parties on the left. The Hollande presidency notably featured proposals for greater openness of official memory and clarity regarding the actions of the French state in Algeria. While successive presidents and governments across this period have, on the whole, made progress towards greater engagement with memories of the Algerian War, the extent of this recognition has also consistently been tempered by competing political interests that provide little space for the effective mediation of a plurality of memories.

### **Jacques Chirac: Honouring France's Colonial Past**

This survey of memorial policies in France assesses developments at a national level during the Chirac presidency, in particular his second term in office between 2002 and 2007. As well as Chirac's re-election, legislative elections in 2002 resulted in a parliamentary majority for the centre-right. This change of government had significant consequences for policies on commemoration of the Algerian War. In relation to his concept of 'régime mémoriel', Michel also observes that changes in parliamentary majority have a direct effect on the tone of memorial legislation that is passed.<sup>96</sup> The policies on commemoration that were introduced in this period signalled a clear shift in tone from the previous Socialist government, which had focused on establishing greater official recognition of the conflict and clarity regarding the actions of the French state. This government, in power between 1997 and 2002 with Lionel Jospin as Prime Minister, passed the 1999 law that adopted official usage of the term 'guerre d'Algérie'.<sup>97</sup> While developments in official memory and progress towards greater openness on the colonial past had therefore taken place, the tone of the 'régime mémoriel' adopted in the

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<sup>96</sup> Michel, *Gouverner les mémoires*, p. 135.

<sup>97</sup> This government also supported measures aimed at establishing greater openness and clarity on France's colonial past, including a report on police archives concerning the 17 October 1961 massacre of Algerian demonstrators in Paris. See Dieudonné Mandelkern, André Wiehn and Mireille Jean, 'Rapport sur les archives de la Préfecture de police relatives à la manifestation organisée par le FLN le 17 octobre 1961', <<http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/984000823/index.shtml>> [accessed 13 December 2017].

following years under Chirac and his government placed emphasis on claims to the positive values of French colonialism in Algeria. By assessing examples of commemorations and investments in physical sites of memory, this section considers the extent to which the policies introduced during the Chirac presidency were driven by what Bancel and Blanchard identify as ‘une forte nostalgie sur la période coloniale’.<sup>98</sup> This involved minimizing details of the loss of empire that occurred at the end of the War of Independence, a practice that hindered full engagement with the details of France’s colonial past and its continuing relevance.

Under Chirac, each of the three constituencies considered here received varying forms of recognition and commemoration. In the case of Harkis, recognition from the French state was achieved alongside greater prominence for memorialization in the public space. In particular, a national day of commemoration (25 September) – first observed in 2001 and fixed as an annual date by decree in 2003 – was introduced to honour the military service of Harkis and affirm official recognition in France.<sup>99</sup> In his speech in 2001 to mark this commemoration, Chirac presented French recognition of the Harkis as ‘un rendez-vous avec notre histoire’ that involved honouring military service and loyalty, as ‘les anciens des forces supplétives ont fait, il y a quarante ans, le choix de la France’.<sup>100</sup> Chirac therefore presented the military service of Harkis as arising from strong commitment and loyalty to France. This commemoration, however, did not address fully the details of their status as colonial subjects. Laura Reeck also observes how Chirac’s

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<sup>98</sup> Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard, ‘Une impossible politique muséale pour l’histoire coloniale?’, in *Vers la guerre des identités ? De la fracture coloniale à la révolution ultranationale*, ed. by Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Dominic Thomas (Paris: La Découverte, 2016), pp. 137–152 (p. 138).

<sup>99</sup> ‘Décret du 31 mars 2003 instituant une Journée nationale d’hommage aux harkis et autres membres des formations supplétives’, <<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000419142&categorieLien=cid>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

<sup>100</sup> ‘Discours de M. Jacques Chirac, Président de la République, à l’occasion de la journée d’hommage national aux Harkis, 25 September 2001’, <<http://www.jacqueschirac-asso.fr/fr/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/Hommage-national-aux-harkis-septembre-2001.pdf>> [accessed 26 October 2017].

address proposing an advance in recognition of the Harkis was notable for the emphasis placed on a valorization of loyalty and a military contribution to France.<sup>101</sup> This nonetheless stopped short of engaging fully with the French state's responsibility for the treatment of the Harkis since 1962.

After this initial form of official recognition, commemoration of Harkis has subsequently involved their addition, alongside former conscripts and reservists, to the national monument to military victims of the Algerian War at Quai Branly in Paris. The memorial, which was inaugurated by Chirac in 2002, is a focal point for official French commemoration of the conflict.<sup>102</sup> As chapters 2 and 4 will assess further, however, it is also significant to the range of competing claims to the representations of these veterans. Having served for the defeated French side, both Harkis and former conscripts have a public profile that has been shaped by the long-term absence of official recognition of the conflict since its end in 1962. The persistent tensions in contemporary France also stem from the problematic engagement in forms of official memory with the broad political and social legacies of the Algerian War. In their categorization of what they identify as the multiple constituencies of memory of the conflict, Stora and Harbi observe the conditions in which silence and forms of repression of memory have prevailed: 'Dans la France actuelle, les groupes porteurs d'une mémoire enfouie se sont longtemps réfugiés dans le non-dit. La France, attentive à célébrer ses gloires, répugne à découvrir ses blessures.'<sup>103</sup> This reluctance to address the subject of the War and to examine the most troubling details of France's colonial past in Algeria has notably revolved around aspects of the way in which the conflict was fought and the prevalence of repressive measures, including the use of torture by French forces. The official

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<sup>101</sup> Laura Reeck, 'Forgetting and Remembering the Harkis', *Romance Quarterly*, 53:1 (2006), 49–61 (p. 50).

<sup>102</sup> 'Le Mémorial de la guerre d'Algérie et des combats du Maroc et de la Tunisie (Paris)' <<http://www.defense.gouv.fr/site-memoire-et-patrimoine/memoire/hauts-lieux-de-memoire/le-memorial-de-la-guerre-d-algerie-et-des-combats-du-maroc-et-de-la-tunisie-paris>> [accessed 24 November 2017].

<sup>103</sup> Stora and Harbi, 'La guerre d'Algérie: de la mémoire à l'Histoire', p. 10.

recognition of the conflict and adoption of the term ‘guerre d’Algérie’ in 1999 indicated, as Sébastien Ledoux contends, French institutions and political actors catching up with a usage that has been common across society and relevant to a range of constituencies shaped by the consequences of decolonization.<sup>104</sup> While physical sites of memory and forms of public commemoration have served to support greater official recognition of the conflict and its consequences for a range of groups, they have equally imposed specific frames of reference for collective memory.

As highlighted by the above discussion of the initiatives relating to Harkis and conscript and reservist veterans, commemoration of the Algerian War during the Chirac presidency consistently involved honouring the service performed by French forces in defence of the colonial order. In addition to marking the losses suffered during the conflict, however, this presentation of official memory also meant placing emphasis on the virtues of France’s status as a former colonial power. As a consequence, both of these constituencies were aligned with a narrowly focused and selective historical narrative. A particular form of support and commemoration relating to *piets-noirs* was presented in the law passed in 2005 that promoted the representation of colonialism as a positive endeavour and emphasised a singular, definitive memory over a plurality in France.<sup>105</sup> For Michel, the law was a significant marker of a shift in ‘régime mémoriel’ due to the way in which, through its various clauses, it satisfied those on the right who sought a riposte to the previous Socialist government that had supported greater openness and plurality.<sup>106</sup> While it therefore presented a reaction against other political positions and measures on commemoration, the law also raised substantial political opposition and highlighted

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<sup>104</sup> Sébastien Ledoux, *Le devoir de mémoire: une formule et son histoire* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2016), p. 196.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Loi n° 2005-158 du 23 février 2005 portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés’,  
<<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000444898&dateTexte=&categorieLien=id>> [accessed 8 November 2017].

<sup>106</sup> Michel, *Gouverner les mémoires*, p. 152.

significant imbalances in representation between differing constituencies of memory.<sup>107</sup> As Nicolas Bancel notes, the political initiative that led to its parliamentary support and introduction was rooted in longer-term forms of influence and electoral interests connected to the population in France of former colonial settlers.<sup>108</sup> The achievement of this incorporation of a specific narrative and reactionary attitudes into an official policy on collective memory at a national level represents success for activism representing *pied-noir* interests.<sup>109</sup> It corresponds, in particular, to the terms of competition between groups identified by Savarèse, for whom memory activists aim ‘convertir une mémoire en histoire officielle, via la reconnaissance, par l’État, d’une posture victimaire ou de souvenirs légitimes’.<sup>110</sup> The effect of the recognition and support for specific grievances in this instance was further fragmentation and polarization of positions. This partial engagement with aspects of the conflict and France’s colonial past was, nonetheless, a consistent theme of the Chirac presidency. The conditions of debate that developed in this period also fuelled further competition over influence on top-down measures for commemoration, as summarized neatly by Rioux: ‘A été ouvert en 2005 un nouvel âge de la mémoire: celui de l’exercice du souvenir prisonnier d’un air du temps moralisateur et

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<sup>107</sup> Opposition to the law and a critical reflection on France’s relation to its colonial past was notably expressed by the Martinican writers Édouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau in their open letter to Nicolas Sarkozy, then Interior Minister. See ‘De Loin, Par Édouard Glissant et Patrick Chamoiseau’, *L’Humanité*, 7 December 2005, <<https://www.humanite.fr/node/340125>> [accessed 16 March 2018].

<sup>108</sup> Nicolas Bancel, ‘The law of February 23, 2005: The Uses Made of the Revival of France’s “Colonial Grandeur”’, in *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France*, ed. by Charles Tshimanga, Didier Gondola and Peter J. Bloom (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 167–183 (p. 168).

<sup>109</sup> Article 4 of the law, which stipulated that the French school curriculum should emphasize the positive nature of French colonialism, was altered in favour of a more neutral tone by presidential decree a year later. See ‘Loi n° 2005-158 du 23 février 2005 portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés – Article 4’, <[https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexteArticle.do;jsessionid=3C363F11D4740B948E5D92AEFC15F07C.tplgfr38s\\_2?idArticle=LEGIARTI000006238939&cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006051312&dateTexte=20180316](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexteArticle.do;jsessionid=3C363F11D4740B948E5D92AEFC15F07C.tplgfr38s_2?idArticle=LEGIARTI000006238939&cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006051312&dateTexte=20180316)> [accessed 16 March 2018].

<sup>110</sup> Eric Savarèse, ‘À propos de la guerre des mémoires: les vertus de la médiation scientifique’, in *L’Algérie dépassionnée: Au-delà du tumulte des mémoires*, ed. by Eric Savarèse (Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 2008), pp. 7–21 (p. 8).

aux abois.<sup>111</sup> The presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy (from 2007 to 2012), to which this survey will now turn, provided further support for such an atmosphere.

### Nicolas Sarkozy: Rejection of 'repentance'

The commitments to commemoration made by Sarkozy during his presidency involved significant continuity from the overall tone of the 'régime mémoriel' of the Chirac presidency. During his election campaign in 2007, for example, Sarkozy proposed that the French state should recognise its abandonment of Harkis, as well as arguing for the nation's 'moral debt' owed *pieds-noirs* for the loss of their former territory.<sup>112</sup> Further to the debates over the significance of colonialism to contemporary society that developed around the controversial 2005 law, Sarkozy also engaged with criticism of the notion of 'repentance' for France's colonial past.<sup>113</sup> The position defended by Sarkozy therefore involved sustaining what Fiona Barclay terms 'the myth that the judicial process of decolonisation concluded the business of the colonial period.'<sup>114</sup> Immediately after his election victory in 2007, for example, Sarkozy declared his opposition to repentance: 'Je veux en finir avec la repentance qui est une forme de haine de soi, et la concurrence des mémoires qui nourrit la haine des autres.'<sup>115</sup> This rejection of repentance in favour of a commitment to a form of singularity of memory constituted a significant part of the position on commemoration adopted by Sarkozy. While his position was to appeal to a collective sense of belonging, his stated attitude also involved the defence of aspects of France's actions as a colonial power and selective representations of the significance of

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<sup>111</sup> Rioux, *La France perd la mémoire*, p. 19.

<sup>112</sup> 'Déclaration de M. Nicolas Sarkozy, ministre de l'intérieur et de l'aménagement du territoire, président de l'UMP et candidat à l'élection présidentielle, sur son souhait de voir se réunifier l'espace méditerranéen pour le remettre au coeur de la civilisation occidentale et de la mondialisation, Toulon le 7 février 2007', <<http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/073000533.html>> [accessed 15 November 2017].

<sup>113</sup> Daniel Lefeuvre, *Pour en finir avec la repentance coloniale* (Paris: Flammarion, 2008), p. 14.

<sup>114</sup> Fiona Barclay, 'Introduction: The Postcolonial Nation', in *France's Colonial Legacies: Memory, Identity and Narrative*, ed. by Fiona Barclay (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 1–26 (p. 6).

<sup>115</sup> 'Le discours de Nicolas Sarkozy', *Libération*, 6 May 2007, <[http://www.liberation.fr/france/2007/05/06/le-discours-de-nicolas-sarkozy\\_9889](http://www.liberation.fr/france/2007/05/06/le-discours-de-nicolas-sarkozy_9889)> [accessed 3 November 2017].



this contested past to contemporary society. The extent of such attempts to alter representations of colonialism is neatly summarized by Achille Mbembe: ‘Discourse against repentance seeks to calmly assume all aspects of France’s history. Its goal is to rehabilitate the colonial enterprise.’<sup>116</sup> On the specific issue of relations with Algeria, Sarkozy nonetheless made advances towards acknowledgement of French responsibilities. During a state visit in 2007, he declared French colonialism in Algeria to have been ‘injuste’, but did not make any further criticism or propose an apology.<sup>117</sup>

A consistent theme of the Sarkozy presidency was the way in which he was well attuned to electoral interests when presenting engagements with legacies of colonialism and the claims of different groups. During the 2012 election campaign, for example, Sarkozy renewed arguments for the positive details of France’s colonial past and directed his discourse carefully when addressing *pied-noirs* and *harki* audiences.<sup>118</sup> This strategy therefore involved identifying specific constituencies and appealing to them individually with commitments to further official recognition and support. For Vince, these engagements in memory politics demonstrate the extent to which electoral interests inform positions:

The opportunism of many politicians who engage in the politics of memory is perhaps best embodied by President Nicolas Sarkozy, who has engaged with both the politics of politically correct repentance and unashamed colonial nostalgia and revisionism, alternately satisfying and enraging a range of memory lobbies and civil society actors.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘Provincialising France?’, *Public Culture*, 23:1 (2011), 85–119 (p.113).

<sup>117</sup> ‘Nicolas Sarkozy dénonce le colonialisme’, RFI, 4 December 2007, <[http://www1.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/096/article\\_59834.asp](http://www1.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/096/article_59834.asp)> [accessed 3 November 2017].

<sup>118</sup> ‘France – Algérie: Sarkozy réitère son refus de la repentance’, *Jeune Afrique*, 9 March 2012, <<http://www.jeuneafrique.com/177048/politique/france-alg-rie-sarkoy-r-it-re-son-refus-de-la-repentance/>> [accessed 3 November 2017].

<sup>119</sup> Vince, ‘Questioning the Colonial Fracture: The Algerian War as a “useful past” in contemporary France and Algeria’, p. 339.

This approach to political campaigning had the effect of exacerbating forms of competition between groups for recognition from the French state. It was also characteristic of the approach towards commemoration demonstrated during the presidencies of both Sarkozy and Chirac, for whom involvement in questions of collective memory relating to the Algerian War and its afterlives was consistently shaped by contemporary political interests.

### **François Hollande: Clarity regarding the colonial past**

The election of Hollande as president in May 2012 was followed by a Socialist victory in legislative elections. This change in both presidency and parliamentary majority brought about a contrast in tone from previous right wing administrations regarding commemoration of the Algerian War and France's colonial past. This shift in emphasis of the 'régime mémoriel', however, also represented a return to the tone of the policies that had been pursued until a decade previously – under the Socialist government of Jospin – and then countered by the successive policies of Chirac and Sarkozy. Overall progress was nonetheless made towards greater openness. In a speech given during a state visit to Algeria in 2012, for example, Hollande presented a case for further efforts towards reconciliation, as he declared that 'la paix des mémoires [...] repose sur la connaissance et la divulgation de l'histoire'.<sup>120</sup> In particular, this involved placing emphasis on greater clarity in engagement with details of the colonial past and the lasting implications of this past in the present, in contrast with previous presidencies.<sup>121</sup> As Barclay also remarks, while Hollande was cautious in his negotiation of debates and references to the past, his stated commitment to greater openness signalled a concern for

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<sup>120</sup> François Hollande, 'Allocution devant les deux chambres réunies du Parlement algérien', 20 December 2012, <<http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/allocution-devant-les-deux-chambres-reunies-du-parlement-algerien/>> [accessed 2 November 2017].

<sup>121</sup> Ilan Caro, 'Chirac, Sarkozy, Hollande: trois discours sur l'Algérie', *France Info*, 21 December 2012, <[http://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/chirac-sarkozy-hollande-trois-discours-sur-l-algerie\\_190865.html](http://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/chirac-sarkozy-hollande-trois-discours-sur-l-algerie_190865.html)> [accessed 3 November 2017].

‘a departure from the instrumentalisation of the Sarkozy years’.<sup>122</sup> Significantly, the election of Hollande as president in 2012 coincided with the 50th anniversary of the end of the Algerian War of Independence, which was marked in a range of ways in both France and Algeria.<sup>123</sup> The anniversary provided a reference point for an assessment of changes in the tone and details of commemoration, as well as the conditions of debate over how to engage most effectively with the details of the conflict.

While shifts in political majorities influenced changes in tone of the ‘régime mémoriel’ in France relating to the Algerian War, developments regarding engagement with the details of the conflict for the 2012 anniversary also took place within institutions. Of particular note was the exhibition at the French military museum (at the Hôtel des Invalides in Paris), which covered the history of the conflict and the whole of the colonial period in Algeria, from the conquest of 1830 to independence in 1962.<sup>124</sup> The approach adopted by the exhibition towards the framing of the conflict in a broader historical context represented, as Isabel Hollis notes, an advance in commemoration and museological display of events.<sup>125</sup> Representation of all aspects of the conflict included, notably, reference to the systematic use of torture by the French military and the state of legal and political exception applied to Algeria. In seeking to present the subject in a clear and balanced manner, the exhibition was nonetheless cautious in its representation of details of the conflict.<sup>126</sup> The museum’s curator, Christian Baptiste, argued for the objective, documentary role of the exhibition: ‘nous nous situons dans une démarche historique,

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<sup>122</sup> Barclay, ‘Introduction: The Postcolonial Nation’, p. 9.

<sup>123</sup> Michèle Bacholle-Boskovic, ‘Quelles commémorations pour les cinquante ans de la guerre d’Algérie?’, *French Cultural Studies*, 25:2 (2014), 233–45 (p. 241).

<sup>124</sup> Algérie 1830-1962 avec Jacques Ferrandez, Musée de l’Armée, <<http://www.invalides.org/ExpositionAlgerie/presentation-de-l-exposition.html>> [accessed 6 September 2017].

<sup>125</sup> Isabel Hollis, ‘Algeria in Paris: Fifty Years On’, in *France since the 1970s: History, Politics and Memory in an Age of Uncertainty*, ed. by Emile Chabal (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp.129–42 (p. 133).

<sup>126</sup> Ariane Bavelier, ‘Musée de l’Armée: l’art de montrer un sujet qui fâche’, *Le Figaro*, 23 January 2012 <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/culture/2012/01/23/03004-20120123ARTFIG00666-musee-de-l-armee-l-art-de-montrer-un-sujet-qui-fache.php>> [accessed 22 September 2017].

qui ne porte pas de jugement politique, philosophique ou moral.<sup>127</sup> The emphasis placed on clarity of historical details in order to support a plurality of memories also involved consultation with representatives of a range of differing groups and constituencies.<sup>128</sup> Overall, the exhibition therefore pursued careful negotiation of the multiple memories of the Algerian War held by a wide range of groups in France. Thanks to its treatment of the subject of the Algerian War, in contrast with previous forms of official and institutional recognition, the exhibition, Hollis argues, ‘was a striking departure for its open, public overview of the colonial period and its complexities. It was significant because of its location – the centrality and status of the Hôtel des Invalides gave it additional legitimacy – and because of its proximity to France’s major political institutions.’<sup>129</sup> It above all presented a commitment to recognition of details of the conflict and the incorporation of the end of the colonial empire into an official narrative of the state and its institutions in France. For Claire Eldridge, the extent and range of forms of commemoration at this time signalled a move towards more effective negotiation of the afterlives of the conflict: ‘On the whole, 2012 marked a concerted effort in the public domain to discuss the war in ways that were historically grounded, open, and inclusive of the different communities affected by these events.’<sup>130</sup> At the same time, consensus was far from assured, and commemoration remained a source of political tension.

Disputes over political engagements in collective memory have had the effect of turning anniversaries and landmark dates relating to the Algerian War into major battlegrounds

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<sup>127</sup> Jean Guisnel, ‘Le directeur du musée de l’Armée: l’exposition Algérie 1830-1962 est “un travail historique”’, *Le Point*, 29 May 2012 <[http://www.lepoint.fr/editos-du-point/jean-guisnel/le-directeur-du-musee-de-l-armee-l-exposition-algerie-1830-1962-est-un-travail-historique-29-05-2012-1466292\\_53.php](http://www.lepoint.fr/editos-du-point/jean-guisnel/le-directeur-du-musee-de-l-armee-l-exposition-algerie-1830-1962-est-un-travail-historique-29-05-2012-1466292_53.php)> [accessed 22 September 2017].

<sup>128</sup> Thomas Hofnung, ‘France-Algérie: l’armée fait son exposition de conscience’, *Liberation*, 25 June 2012 <[http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2012/06/25/france-algerie-l-armee-fait-son-exposition-de-conscience\\_829025](http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2012/06/25/france-algerie-l-armee-fait-son-exposition-de-conscience_829025)> [accessed 22 September 2017].

<sup>129</sup> Hollis, ‘Algeria in Paris: Fifty Years On’, p. 136.

<sup>130</sup> Claire Eldridge, *From Empire to Exile: History and memory within the pied-noir and harki communities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), p. 295.

for contrasting historical narratives. The case of 19 March, the anniversary of the date of the ceasefire in Algeria in 1962 is an important exemplar in this regard. It provides a case study of the issues that this chapter addresses surrounding the politics of memory and the changeable positions on commemoration in France. In addition to Hollande's declaration of support for greater historical clarity and the museum exhibition discussed above, 2012 also saw a major initiative of the Hollande presidency regarding commemoration of the Algerian War, namely the law that introduced a national day to mark the ceasefire and to honour all military and civilian victims of the conflict.<sup>131</sup> While it was passed by the Socialist parliamentary majority, the law in fact involved the revival of proposals that were originally made in 2002 by the Jospin government but then avoided by successive right-wing administrations.<sup>132</sup> In the intervening decade, however, an alternative date – 5 December – was introduced and became an annual fixture for the commemoration during the Chirac presidency, which was focused on military service in Algeria.<sup>133</sup> This reference point for commemoration was also consistent with the tone identified above, in relation to the presidencies of Chirac and Sarkozy, of a rejection of the notion of 'repentance' or engagement with the consequences of the conflict for France's loss of its status as a colonial power. The eventual adoption of the law in 2012 – and the change in tone of the 'régime mémoriel' that it signified – was therefore wholly dependent on political balances of power.

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<sup>131</sup> 'Loi n° 2012-1361 du 6 décembre 2012 relative à la reconnaissance du 19 mars comme journée nationale du souvenir et de recueillement à la mémoire des victimes civiles et militaires de la guerre d'Algérie et des combats en Tunisie et au Maroc', <<http://legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000026733612&categorieLien=id>> [accessed 6 May 2016].

<sup>132</sup> Patrick Roger, 'Le 19 Mars, Journée du souvenir pour les victimes de la guerre d'Algérie', *Le Monde*, 29 November 2012, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2012/11/29/19-mars-journee-du-souvenir-pour-les-victimes-de-la-guerre-d-algerie\\_1798168\\_823448.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2012/11/29/19-mars-journee-du-souvenir-pour-les-victimes-de-la-guerre-d-algerie_1798168_823448.html)> [accessed 17 November 2017]. For a full timetable of the passing of the law – from its initial proposal to its official adoption a decade later – see: <<https://www.senat.fr/dossier-legislatif/ppl01-188.html>> [accessed 23 November 2017].

<sup>133</sup> Décret n°2003-925 du 26 septembre 2003 instituant une journée nationale d'hommage aux "morts pour la France" pendant la guerre d'Algérie et les combats du Maroc et de la Tunisie, le 5 décembre de chaque année', <<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000797564>> [accessed 28 September 2016].

This specific dispute over how to remember the end of the conflict and the transition to Algerian independence demonstrates how competing mobilizations of memory serve to perpetuate a state of impasse and deepen divisions surrounding the representation of France's colonial past. In the case of the 19 March anniversary, therefore, the alternation between political majorities of left and right has resulted in multiple commemorations of the same event, but no effective consensus or support for a plurality of memories. The anniversary date is also identified by Fourquet and Lebourg as a significant measure of broader disputes over the significance of the conflict: 'La polémique annuelle autour de cette date est un des signes les plus évidentes de la façon dont le souvenir de la guerre d'Algérie travaille les imaginaires présents.'<sup>134</sup> It thus demonstrates the range of competing interpretations and historical narratives that have persisted in France, even as commemoration of the Algerian War has become ever more widespread and prominent. As Stora also outlines, the existence of a range of contrasting accounts among those competing for recognition and prominence is a crucial aspect of a 'guerre des mémoires' in France: 'Les différents groupes s'accrochent à des lieux ou des dates charnières symboliques pour étayer leurs revendications mémorielles.'<sup>135</sup> The continued lack of connections or interactions between these groups also leads to further imbalances in representation. For example, as this thesis will explore further in chapter 3, on *pied-noir* memory, the date of 19 March has been opposed by many representatives of the interests of former settlers aligned with reactionary politics. At the same time, however, the anniversary has been supported and marked by other memory activists, notably groups representing French conscript and reservist veterans, for whom it is a valuable reference point for reconciliation and plurality.

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<sup>134</sup> Fourquet and Lebourg, *La nouvelle guerre d'Algérie n'aura pas lieu*, p. 74.

<sup>135</sup> Stora, *La guerre des mémoires*, p. 15.

Across the period from 2002 to 2014, a consistent thread is identifiable of competition between groups for recognition and prominence of memorialization in public space. Writing in 2002, Richard Derderian identified a state of impasse for attempts to support a plurality of memories of the Algerian War due to strongly ‘cloistered’ forms of remembering which obstructed engagement with the complexity of details of the past. Such conditions also contribute to imbalances between groups in terms of representation and political influence. As the above survey has demonstrated, this has persisted through to the present. Derderian observes, in particular, that the conditions in which constituencies of memory pursue exclusive claims to recognition stem from the power of selective forms of remembering and self-representation: ‘In the case of both the community of French settlers and that of the military, long-established myths employed to interpret the Algerian past still function as powerful exculpatory or self-redeeming devices in the present.’<sup>136</sup> The persistence of this condition in subsequent years highlights the way in which memory is deployed in relation to concerns in the present. It equally demonstrates the consistent appeal of collective memory in sustaining the ‘political culture’ of each of the groups in France that has been shaped by the fallout from the Algerian War. As Robert Gildea has elsewhere identified, attachment to collective memory can be maintained by specific forms of myth and selective self-representation: ‘Myths are narratives developed to define the identity and aspirations of groups or countries and need no factual basis in the historical record.’<sup>137</sup> The survey of the memorial landscape in contemporary France relating to the Algerian War highlights a clash of several ‘political cultures’ and dominant myths, with varying amounts of political influence and representation.

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<sup>136</sup> Richard L. Derderian, ‘Algeria as lieu de mémoire’, p. 29.

<sup>137</sup> Robert Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows: A New History of the French Resistance* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), p. 9.

In addition to the pursuit by memory activists of formal recognition and legal settlements of claims, the range of measures passed in recent years governing official memory and commemoration has sought to settle positions definitively for specific groups. On top of the 2001 commemoration of Harkis, the 2005 law, as Eldridge argues, ‘reflected not only the effectiveness of lobbying efforts by *pied-noir* and *harki* activists respectively, but also the growing role of the state as simultaneously an actor and an arbiter’.<sup>138</sup> The succession of legal and commemorative measures has therefore had the effect of enforcing divides between constituencies of memory, as well as contributing to further imbalances in representation. In a survey of recent disputes over commemoration of the Algerian War, Lebourg also summarizes the conditions in which different constituencies of memory in France are appealed to on the basis of their varying electoral significance and the influence possessed by activist groups: ‘La mémoire fonctionne comme un marché, avec des acteurs qui y visent à la concentration des capitaux sociaux.’<sup>139</sup> A system of competing interests and fluctuating values belonging to different groups thus leads to further tension and limits the development of consensus over how to engage effectively with details of the colonial past that remain significant to contemporary society. The survey in this chapter of the memorial landscape of recent years in France relating to the Algerian War of Independence has assessed factors of such persistent divisions and imbalances in representation. As this thesis contends, literary narratives provide a contrast to the political conditions that continue to weigh heavily on collective memory. This chapter will now turn to consider the profile of each of the three constituencies of memory and will outline how recent literary narratives present original approaches towards the mediation of memory. In the first instance, this will involve an overview of

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<sup>138</sup> Eldridge, *From Empire to Exile*, p. 277.

<sup>139</sup> Nicolas Lebourg, ‘Ce que signifie la haine du 19 mars’, Slate.fr, 19 March 2015, <<http://www.slate.fr/story/99215/haine-19-mars-1962>> [accessed 29 June 2016].



collective memory among Harkis of experiences of resettlement in France following decolonization in Algeria and perspectives on a persistently marginal position.

### **Harki memory**

As one of the categories of auxiliary forces employed by the French authorities during the Algerian War, the Harkis represented a section of the colonial population mobilized for service in rural areas. At the peak of French military operations in 1958, the number of Algerian men serving as Harkis reached around 60,000.<sup>140</sup> Although they contributed to an overall superiority in numbers for French forces over Algerian nationalists, such figures do not, however, indicate loyalty or the variety of reasons for enlistment. In addition to their short periods of employment, men who served as Harkis occupied a consistently precarious position due to their civilian status. Estimates at the time of the ceasefire in March 1962 suggested that around 45,000 were still in French ranks.<sup>141</sup> Faced with a return to civilian life in post-independence Algeria, fear of imprisonment and widespread persecution led many to seek refuge and resettlement in France with their families. The rapid transformation imposed upon Harkis by events in 1962, combined with the marginal status to which they had been limited when serving with French forces, contributed to the crises provoked by the political aftermath of the war. As Shepard identifies, a policy of rupture was imposed at the moment of independence, enabling the abandonment of France's status as a colonial power: "This allowed the French to forget that Algeria had been an integral part of France since the 1830s and to escape many of the larger implications of that shared past."<sup>142</sup> The closing-off of connections to Algeria in political and legal measures, as well as the repression of collective memory, had particularly stark consequences for the Harkis who resettled in France, due to their

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<sup>140</sup> Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 250.

<sup>141</sup> Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War*, p. 325.

<sup>142</sup> Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, p. 2.

position as a group treated consistently as a burden and representing several significant legacies of the conflict. The marginal status in France experienced by subsequent generations persists due to tensions that have remained unresolved since 1962.

The resettlement of Harki families took place at the same time as the arrival in France of the European settler population of Algeria (*pieds-noirs*). Both groups were affected profoundly by the territorial shifts that were provoked by Algerian independence in 1962. For Harkis, policies covering rehousing and employment served to reinforce their marginal status. The administrative measures that governed this population also led, as Shepard traces, to the construction of an ethnicized and segregated group:

When confronted with the exodus of “muslims” to the metropole the government did not in fact treat them as French citizens with rights; the harkis were classed as outsiders whom the French Republic welcomed and assisted only out of charity and only in unavoidable circumstances.<sup>143</sup>

The policies that were put into place to govern the Harkis treated them as an exceptional group and therefore served to reinforce the precariousness of their settlement in France. For William B. Cohen, continuity in colonial policy was evidenced by the conditions with which these former servicemen and their families were categorized and administered.<sup>144</sup> In particular, segregation was a defining condition for the Harkis upon arrival in France, as they were housed initially in camps in rural and peripheral locations. Further movement to forestry settlements or dispersal to industrial areas was in line with their marginality, as resettlement of families largely followed employment of the fathers. The conditions imposed by these environments have persisted for many and inform the perspectives on Harki memory and its problematic transmission that are presented in

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<sup>143</sup> Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, p. 234.

<sup>144</sup> William B. Cohen, ‘The Harkis: History and Memory’, in *Algeria & France 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia*, ed. by Patricia M. E. Lorcin (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), pp. 164–80 (p. 170).

narratives by the second generation. Faced with a repression of memory and the lack of a clear framework with which to interpret these conditions, the breaking of silence provides a central focus for more recent literary approaches.

The texts by Dalila Kerchouche (*Mon père, ce Harki*), Zahia Rahmani (*Mozè*) and Fatima Besnaci-Lancou (*Fille de Harki*) — all published in 2003 — portray efforts to interpret and examine experiences of resettlement from Algeria and eventual integration in France. They also engage critically with the condition, proposed elsewhere by Halbwachs, of individual memory and identity tied to a broader collective frame.<sup>145</sup> As Eldridge outlines, the absence of a supportive framework or means of expression reinforced the sense of a peripheral position in France for families: ‘The lack of supportive *cadres sociaux*, plus the many obstacles – practical, cultural and psychological – to the articulation and transmission of the past confined the *harki* community to silence in the postwar years.’<sup>146</sup> Each of the three works analysed here features an assessment of the means by which silencing and confinement were maintained, as well as the achievement of both parents and children in eventually breaking with such a condition. They also present a shift in focus from the earlier historical accounts, such as that developed by Mohand Hamoumou, which centred on claims of victimization and abandonment of Harkis by France. In his 1993 study, Hamoumou described these former servicemen as ‘pauvres hommes, victimes d’un piège historique, qui ne comprennent pas ou mal ce qui leur arrive, et qui souffrent’.<sup>147</sup> For Hamoumou, the fate of Harkis in Algeria and France had been determined by forces beyond their control. Redress for the suffering of Harkis and their families would thus require acknowledgement from the French state of military service and contributions during the conflict. Recognition of Harkis along such lines was provided by the forms of commemorations and memorialization of service to France

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<sup>145</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 22.

<sup>146</sup> Eldridge, *From Empire to Exile*, p. 86.

<sup>147</sup> Mohand Hamoumou, *Et ils sont devenus harkis* (Paris: Fayard, 1993), p. 3.

during the Algerian War developed during the Chirac presidency. As discussed above, however, this commemoration involved only limited engagement with the details and context of their status as French colonial subjects in Algeria. By contrast, the narrators of each of the texts by Kerchouche, Rahmani and Besnaci-Lancou place emphasis on the agency and critical awareness possessed by Harkis in their responses to exile and resettlement in France. Textual analysis in chapter 2 will focus on the mediating role performed by these female authors and consider the ways in which they challenge previous limitations on expression and self-representation in France. The critical perspectives that these younger authors present therefore serve as significant means for the intergenerational transmission of memory.

### ***Pied-noir* Memory**

A different manner of resettlement in France and response to exile from that of Harkis has shaped the experiences of the the *pieds-noirs*, the population of former colonial settlers in Algeria. After moving from Algeria at the climax of the War of Independence, they have defined themselves in the public sphere in France by nostalgia for their former home and grievances against the French state. Yann Scioldo-Zürcher traces how, in the years after Algerian independence, a series of legal measures on compensation for *pieds-noirs* were passed that addressed the settlement of both a material and symbolic debt owed to them by the French state. The passing of the laws and mechanisms for compensation, Scioldo-Zürcher argues, made the *pieds-noirs* a constituency with specific interests and political influence.<sup>148</sup> It was equally through this relation of support for economic integration that the question of the debt owed to former settlers by the French

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<sup>148</sup> Yann Scioldo-Zürcher, 'The Cost of Decolonization: Compensating the *Pieds-Noirs*', in *France Since the 1970s: History, Politics and Memory in an Age of Uncertainty*, ed. by Emile Chabal (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 99-114 (p. 101).

state became central to grievances.<sup>149</sup> The rooting of memory of colonial Algeria in reference to the former territory of settlers also shaped efforts to obtain redress for uprooting. After the achievement of material compensation and economic integration into metropolitan France, as Eldridge explains, *pieds-noirs* turned to the pursuit of recognition of a distinct community identity and cultural heritage. This meant a ‘shift in priorities from practical to cultural’.<sup>150</sup> The chapter focused on *pied-noir* memory will feature a study of activist groups and their political lobbying activities. As Eldridge also notes, community groups engaged in commemoration and the promotion of a collective heritage of colonial Algeria have been crucial actors in the development of a public profile for the interests of former settlers.<sup>151</sup> The focus by these groups on the preservation of community heritage involves defending interests against perceived threats from other historical narratives and commemorations of the Algerian War in France.

Central to all such accounts of the *pied-noir* experience is the claim of victimization, a crucial part of the narrative presented by activist groups in their pursuit of political influence and a prominent position in memory debates. Where official silence at the level of the French state over the colonial past in Algeria was broken by acts of recognition such as the 1999 law and subsequent forms of commemoration, it had, as Patricia Lorcin notes, long before been ‘fissured’ by the memory work of various groups including the *pieds-noirs*.<sup>152</sup> In an assessment of the forms taken by upsurges of nostalgia in recent years for France’s colonial past, Lorcin has identified increased efforts among a *pied-noir* population to preserve and promote a highly selective memory through its institutionalization. Lorcin points, in particular, to the examples of the *Centre de documentation des français d’Algérie* (CDDFA) in Perpignan and the *Centre de documentation*

<sup>149</sup> Scioldo-Zürcher, ‘The Cost of Decolonization’, p. 107.

<sup>150</sup> Eldridge, *From Empire to Exile*, p. 63.

<sup>151</sup> Eldridge, *From Empire to Exile*, p. 65.

<sup>152</sup> Patricia M. E. Lorcin, ‘Introduction’, in *Algeria & France 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia*, ed. by Patricia M. E. Lorcin (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), pp. xix–xxx (p. xxv).

*historique sur l'Algérie* (CDHA) in Aix-en-Provence. Both are controlled by community groups engaged in memory activism and demonstrate approaches to museological representation of France's Algerian past 'that blur the boundaries between historical memory and colonial nostalgia, between fact and fiction'.<sup>153</sup> Memorials and museums have served consistently as the sites around which disputes over representation of collective memory and the ongoing afterlives of Algeria in France have played out. As Dominique Poulot notes in the context of a 'guerre de mémoires', the development of memorials has been pursued by several constituencies of memory 'comme si la muséalisation (et la reconnaissance qu'elle incarne) suffisait à satisfaire *de facto* les revendications de mémoires blessées'.<sup>154</sup> In this pursuit of museological forms to provide a definitive historical account and reference point for collective memory, *pieds-noirs* have long been the most prominent constituency. Due to the continued influence of organizations involved in memory activism and political lobbying, furthermore, they are beneficiaries of a situation of competition for recognition.

The two novels that deal with *pied-noir* memory that are under analysis in this thesis – *La solitude de la fleur blanche* (2009) by Annelise Roux and *Trois jours à Oran* (2012) by Anne Plantagenet – both feature narrators who are concerned with the intergenerational transmission of memory. They are also both sensitive to the public profile and stereotype in France of *pieds-noirs* associated with reactionary nostalgia. In particular, they assess the connections between memory and spatiality for former settlers, as the consistent occurrence of references to the former colonial territory of Algeria forms the basis of their approaches towards situating *pied-noir* accounts within a plural and ultimately reconciliatory collective memory. As well as this sensitivity to the status of former settlers

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<sup>153</sup> Patricia M. E. Lorcin, 'France's Nostalgias for Empire', in *France since the 1970s: History, Politics and Memory in an Age of Uncertainty*, ed. by Emile Chabal (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 143–71 (p. 164).

<sup>154</sup> Dominique Poulot, 'Musées et guerres de mémoires: pédagogie et frustration mémorielle', in *Les guerres de mémoires: La France et son histoire*, ed. by Pascal Blanchard and Isabelle Veyrat-Masson (Paris: La Découverte, 2008), pp. 230–40 (p. 230).

in relation to other constituencies of memory, a generational dynamic also informs the critical perspectives presented by narrators. Their distance from the events of mass resettlement to France and the experiences of their parents and grandparents enables them to assess the consequences of this flight from Algeria. In a 2004 study of the *pied-noir* community in France, the sociologist Clarisse Buono proposed a typology of different attitudes held among former settlers and their descendants. The narrators of these two texts correspond strongly to the profile of the category that Buono terms ‘reconstructeurs modernes’.<sup>155</sup> As younger members of the community, they are less inclined to nostalgia, yet are still concerned with personal and familial connections. They therefore reject the notion of a uniform *pied-noir* identity and singular community memory of the sort presented by activists and representatives of a nostalgic or reactionary cause in France. For Buono, the primary concern for these members of a younger generation is to alter the profile of *pied-noir* collective memory in France: ‘L’identité collective *pied-noir* qui émerge du discours des “reconstructeurs modernes” est elle-même exempte de toute caricature négative. Le personnage *pied-noir* qui se dessine est largement plus nuancé.’<sup>156</sup> As textual analysis in chapter 3 will demonstrate, it is the contention of this thesis that the works by Roux and Plantagenet exemplify this attitude. In their role as ‘reconstructrices’, the narrators of the two texts seek to separate *pied-noir* memory from community-specific myths and reposition it in a way that supports a plural form connected to other constituencies.

### **Conscripts and reservist veterans**

Former conscripts and reservists who served in the Algerian War form the focus of the fourth chapter of this thesis. These men and their descendants have been affected significantly by lasting trauma of experiences of the conflict. Their status in France has

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<sup>155</sup> Clarisse Buono, *Pieds-noirs de père en fils* (Paris: Balland, 2004), p. 111.

<sup>156</sup> Buono, *Pieds-noirs de père en fils*, p. 114.

equally been shaped by political conditions of debates over official recognition and commemoration of the conflict. Their exposure to violence and involvement in repressive measures – including the use of torture – during the conflict was followed by a widespread condition of silence and closure to the subject. The nature of approaches in France to the conflict and the absence of official recognition in the following decades was indeed central to the condition of memory as a silent burden common to those who served in Algeria. The absence in France of official recognition of the conflict in the following decades exacerbated the condition felt by veterans of memory as a silent burden, as summarized by Jean-Charles Jauffret:

La guerre d'Algérie est une guerre perdue, cette différence considérable par rapport aux guerres mondiales se greffe sur un conflit non conventionnel et colonial en marge du droit coutumier de la guerre. Avoir 20 ans en guerre d'Algérie, c'est souvent traîner avec soi une mémoire enfouie, douloureuse.<sup>157</sup>

As France's defeat in Algeria was also followed by avoidance of reference to the nation's colonial past, these former servicemen possessed few reference points for commemoration or outlets for expression. A study of the characteristics associated with French veterans of the Algerian War must not, however, simply identify silence or hesitant expression as markers of passivity or victimhood. The present approach towards analysis of contemporary literary representations of veterans will assess the critical value of the status of these former servicemen as both participants in the conflict and witnesses to its lasting consequences upon their return to France. It also considers the substantial increases in commemoration of the conflict in France in the period in which the three texts that portray the processes of breaking silence and bearing witness were produced.

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<sup>157</sup> Jean-Charles Jauffret, *La guerre d'Algérie: les combattants français et leur mémoire* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2016), p. 141.



A condition of the public absence of memory was previously explored by Bertrand Tavernier and Patrick Rotman in their 1992 documentary film, *La guerre sans nom*, which presented the testimonies of a group of veterans.<sup>158</sup> As Tavernier and Rotman argued in the book accompanying the film, the absence of official recognition from the French state of the conflict made full engagement with memory and details of events problematic: ‘Puisque la guerre d’Algérie, simple opération de maintien de l’ordre sur un territoire qui était français n’existe pas, on ne peut la commémorer.’<sup>159</sup> In the gap left by the lack of state-level commemoration of the conflict, however, groups representing the generation of men who served in Algeria as conscripts and who then returned to civilian life have long been engaged in memory activism and formed associations at local levels across France. These groups have been crucial in making memory of the conflict visible in the public space in France. Representatives of this generation of men have sought recognition from the French state for their service and parity of status with veterans of other conflicts. The discourse of public representatives of former conscripts, argues Rousso, is marked by ‘une forme de ressentiment à double face: avoir été obligés de mener une guerre injuste, cruelle et inutile, et n’avoir pas obtenu durant des années de reconnaissance équivalente aux anciens combattants des autres guerres’.<sup>160</sup> The set of demands for recognition pursued in this way by groups representing conscript veterans are therefore driven by an argument of an unresolved symbolic debt owed by the French state. In this regard, Jan C. Jansen compares the activities of groups representing *pieds-noirs* and military veterans respectively in their pursuit of public commemoration: ‘On a local scale, both groups gained visibility from the 1960s through commemorative activities placing memories of colonial Algeria and the Algerian War in the public space

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<sup>158</sup> *La guerre sans nom: Appelés et rappelés en Algérie 1954–1962*, dir. by Bertrand Tavernier (Studio Canal, 1992)

<sup>159</sup> Patrick Rotman and Bertrand Tavernier, *La guerre sans nom: Les appelés d’Algérie 1954–1962* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1992), p. 20.

<sup>160</sup> Rousso, *Face au passé*, p. 122.

of many French *communes*.<sup>161</sup> Examples of localized forms of commemoration and their significance to the public profile of French combatants of the Algerian War will be studied in further detail in chapter 4. Memory activists and representatives of veterans of the conflict have, above all, sought to establish the responsibility of the French state for the fate of these men.

In all three texts, former conscripts and reservist veterans consistently perceive a lack of interest from others following their return to civilian life in France. Each of the works by Laurent Mauvignier (*Des hommes*, 2009), Claire Tencin (*Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bounoul*, 2012) and Maïssa Bey (*Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, 2002) explores the difficulties encountered by individuals who served in Algeria to articulate their experiences. In representing men shaped by the events of the Algerian War and its consequences in French society, they assess the conditions in which silence prevailed and the attitudes towards dealing with the memory of events that developed in subsequent decades. In their study of official silences on the conflict and the position of veterans in France, Raphaëlle Branche and Jim House observe how self-representation by veterans developed in the absence of any formal recognition or clear reference points for collective memory:

In France, it was finally ex-conscript soldiers who took the ambiguous place of the victims. The former soldiers became victims of a misguided state policy that had sent them to fight an unwinnable war in which they were sometimes forced to use torture, and were themselves sometimes killed or maimed.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Jan C. Jansen, 'Memory Lobbying and the shaping of "colonial memories" in France since the 1990s: The Local, the National, and the International', in *Vertriebene and pieds-noirs in postwar Germany and France: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. by Manuel Borutta and Jan C. Jansen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 252–71 (p. 256).

<sup>162</sup> Raphaëlle Branche and Jim House, 'Silences on state violence during the Algerian War of Independence: France and Algeria, 1962–2007', in *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 115–37 (p. 126).

By contrast, the three contemporary texts eschew notions of victimization and an exceptional status for veterans in favour of reflection on broader conditions across French society of engagement with the afterlives of the conflict.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has presented an overview of political debates in France surrounding commemoration of the Algerian War of Independence and the legacies of colonialism. The above survey has identified the broad political dividing lines that govern public forms of memorialization of the conflict. In the period between 2002 and 2014, developments across the successive presidencies of Jacques Chirac, Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande have brought about changes in policies concerning engagement with the details of France's colonial past. Throughout this period, initiatives for commemoration have also been tied closely to political debates and significant divisions between competing interests. As a consequence of this conflict of interpretations and representations of the lasting fallout in France from Algerian independence, moves towards supporting an effective plurality of memories have been consistently limited. The following chapters of this thesis will focus, in turn, on each of the three constituencies of memory introduced above and examine representations of their status in contemporary France. Analysis of literary texts will consider how authors establish responses to the conditions in which memories of the conflict and the lasting consequences of decolonization are represented in a contested memorial landscape in contemporary France. Attention throughout is therefore on the ways in which these works provide forms for the effective negotiation of memories and how they establish new connections to the afterlives of conflict and colonialism.

## Chapter 2: Harki Memory and Narratives

The publication in 2003 of a cluster of texts by female authors – all of whom are from Harki families – gave voice to emerging perspectives in France on the lasting effects of decolonization and Algerian independence. Works by Dalila Kerchouche (*Mon père, ce Harki*, 2003), Zahia Rahmani (*Moʒe*, 2003) and Fatima Besnaci-Lancou (*Fille de Harki*, 2003) address ongoing tensions and contested legacies of France's colonial past. On the strength of greater understanding of the complexity of roles during the Algerian War of Independence, Harki collective memory has in recent years undergone what Martin Evans identifies as a significant 'reimagining'.<sup>163</sup> Each of the texts presents an original and independent approach towards the mediation of memories and dealing with the past. As they investigate formative influences and the experiences of their families, authors also include autobiographical details and personal reflections. These three works are identified by critics such as Nina Sutherland as part of a second-generation Harki corpus that also includes Hadjila Kemoum's novel *Mohand le Harki*.<sup>164</sup> While Kemoum's fictionalized work presents similar themes and critical approaches, the specific focus for the present study is on these texts that present daughters acting directly on behalf of parents to rework dynamics of personal and collective memory. For Giulia Fabbiano, the efforts of younger narrators to uncover the past is motivated by their interest in assessing their position in the present in France, as they 'write in order to understand (not to denounce) and to foster a dialogue (not to accuse)'.<sup>165</sup> As the three authors in question here seek to obtain greater clarity and understanding, they gather testimonies from relatives and reflect on their status in contemporary France as members of Harki

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<sup>163</sup> Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War*, p. 363.

<sup>164</sup> Hadjila Kemoum, *Mohand le Harki* (Paris: Anne Carrière, 2003). On the categorization of texts by the daughters of Harkis, see Nina Sutherland, 'Harki Autobiographies or Collecto-Biographies? Mothers speak through their Daughters', *Romance Studies*, 24:3 (2006), 193–201.

<sup>165</sup> Giulia Fabbiano, 'Writing as Performance: Literary Production and the Stakes of Memory', in *A Practical Guide to French Harki Literature*, ed. by Keith Moser (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), pp. 17–35 (p. 26).

families. Each also consistently demonstrates a concern with establishing narratives to serve as vectors for the effective interpretation and transmission of memory.

These three works represent details of a specific aspect of Harki resettlement, namely the experiences of the families who were processed by French authorities after fleeing Algeria. The historian Abderahmen Moumen traces how around half of the estimated 85,000 former auxiliaries and their families who fled to France after the Algerian War were administered directly, while others settled independently.<sup>166</sup> These families were long confined to both geographical and social peripheries in France. In their approaches to the transmission of memory, narrators who are the daughters of Harkis work to interpret the long-term consequences of the initial conditions of resettlement. In assessing how references to the camps and marginal spaces in France in which Harki families were housed provide a critical focus for these texts, the approach adopted in the present chapter takes as a starting point Henri Lefebvre's conceptualization of space as a product of social relations.<sup>167</sup> Lefebvre's notion of the interconnections between space and power provides an important reference point for assessing the persistence of marginality for Harkis in France. For analysis of the three texts, this involves attention to the ways in which narrators pursue their investigations into the past with reference to the physical spaces where policies governing the Harkis were imposed. The critical perspectives that these narrators present also make use of their personal distance from events. The significance of inter-generational relations in serving to renew perspectives and challenge persistent dividing lines is noted by Eldridge in her assessment of the role that these younger representatives seek to perform: "Tired of being *les oubliés de l'histoire*, the children of the *harkis* were determined to gain recognition on behalf of their parents

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<sup>166</sup> Abderahmen Moumen, 'La notion d'abandon des harkis par les autorités françaises', in *Les Harkis: Histoire, mémoire et transmission*, ed. by Fatima Besnaci-Lancou, Benoît Falaize and Gilles Manceron (Paris: Éditions de l'Atelier, 2010), pp. 47–62 (p. 59).

<sup>167</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 116.

for the sacrifices they had made for France and the suffering they had endured as a consequence.<sup>168</sup> The texts explore both the initial conditions of resettlement and the longer-term effects on Harki families of their treatment by French authorities.

While each of these works starts from an individual standpoint, they aim to uncover details of family experiences and understand the lasting consequences of resettlement from Algeria in the wake of decolonization. For these members of a generation raised in France by parents who resettled from Algeria, a process of affirming personal expression involves an interrogation of the conditions that led to the marginalization of the Harkis and persistent imbalances in social relations. As all three texts portray processes of breaking silence and obtaining testimonies from parents, narrators are concerned with clarifying and pluralizing the transmission of memory in order to represent all those shaped by the afterlives of the conflict. In her categorization of the works by Harki daughters, Sutherland proposes the term ‘collecto-biography’ to designate the genre of these texts, in which narrators aim ‘to provide a voice for their mothers’.<sup>169</sup> The motivation of representatives of a younger generation to obtain clarity regarding the fate of their family has often been driven by the reluctance of parents to revisit the past or discuss details. In addition to the efforts identified by Sutherland to give voice to the mother, the narrators of these texts also challenge the silence of their fathers. Fathers are indeed crucial to the transmission of memory for each of the narrators, given that they are the figures around which the status of the entire family was determined. In the process of these narrators breaking silence and acting on behalf of the parents, and in the words of Kenneth Olsson, ‘the French Republic is put on trial for its betrayal of its

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<sup>168</sup> Claire Eldridge, “‘We’ve never had a voice’: Memory Construction and the Children of the Harkis (1962-1991)”, *French History*, 23:1 (2009), 88–107 (p. 89.)

<sup>169</sup> Sutherland, ‘Harki Autobiographies or Collecto-Biographies?’, p. 194.

former soldiers'.<sup>170</sup> The aim of these approaches is to determine clear responsibility and accountability for France's treatment of Harkis, as well as assessing the origins of their marginal status as colonial subjects in Algeria. This is particularly the case with Rahmani's novel, in which the narrator adopts a confrontational manner in her investigation into her father's suicide. Kerchouche and Besnaci-Lancou are both also concerned with the treatment that their parents were subjected to and the influence of this on their own formative experiences. Each author therefore pursues a form of investigation that is specific to the difficulties that surround their connection to their parents and the conditions in which they uncover important details of family history.

### **Contested memories and their problematic transmission**

As the narrators of all these texts seek to advance beyond the marginal social status of their parents, they are also concerned with inheritance and the influences of previous generations on their own perspectives. In relation to the critical questioning of issues of belonging that they carry out, the work of Halbwachs is significant. In particular, Halbwachs's concept of social frames and the relation of individual memories to collective reference points informs analysis here of the difficulties of transmission and expression of Harki memory that narrators encounter.<sup>171</sup> They contest the sense of their origins as a burden and the problematic position in France that this continues to shape. In their study of ways in which factors of memory can be employed to contest representations of the past, Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone emphasize the dynamics crucial to a process of reinterpretation. It is thus important for a reading of how texts approach collective memory to assess the relevance of 'rethinking generation as precisely the locus of transmission, rather than seeing generations as (self-) defined in

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<sup>170</sup> Kenneth Olsson, 'In the Name of the Father: In the Voice of the Other', in *A Practical Guide to French Harki Literature*, ed. by Keith Moser (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), pp. 145–67 (p. 145).

<sup>171</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 53.

opposition to their predecessors'.<sup>172</sup> In the texts here, narrators thus act and speak on behalf of their parents, while also addressing persistent inequalities that affect their own positions in the present.

Confinement to margins of French society in the decades following decolonization and a rupture from Algeria is found, in each of these works, to have exacerbated the Harkis' sense of collective abandonment. In his study of the legacies of the Algerian War experienced by this group, Hamoumou focuses on dominant issues of collective silence that have shaped studies of memory and belonging. In the fallout from decolonization in 1962, many Harkis not only suffered the consequences of flight from Algeria and resettlement in France, but 'ils ont perdu aussi la bataille de la mémoire'.<sup>173</sup> Their marginal position and passive status, reinforced by the repression of memory at official levels, equally indicate the difficulties surrounding the establishment of a broader account of experiences of the Algerian War. For Hamoumou, therefore, full recognition of the case of the Harkis from either the French or Algerian states 'fissurerait l'histoire officielle' that excludes them.<sup>174</sup> Awareness of the complexities of factors surrounding the enlistment of men as Harkis and their experiences during the conflict, for example, would provide a more nuanced reading of their status and their lack of agency. Further to their problematic response to such limitations, Harki claims for recognition have also often been obscured by the dominance of other groups with contrasting historical narratives, particularly those relating to the *pied-noir* community. As discussed in Chapter 1, there are significant imbalances in representation between different interest groups vying for prominence and political influence.<sup>175</sup> Eldridge also highlights the conditions of this competition for recognition: 'Because no one emerged unsullied from this *sale guerre*,

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<sup>172</sup> Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, 'Transforming Memory' in *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*, ed. by Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 23–28 (p. 27).

<sup>173</sup> Hamoumou, *Et ils sont devenus harkis*, p. 15.

<sup>174</sup> Hamoumou, *Et ils sont devenus harkis*, p. 16.

<sup>175</sup> See, for example, *Et ils sont devenus harkis*, pp. 55–7.



the status of “victim” was not definitively tied to any one group and has thus remained a prize to be fought over.<sup>176</sup> The development in recent years of new critical approaches towards Harki memory has also featured stronger voices questioning the persistence of claims of victimization.

The concern that narrators demonstrate for the establishment of a clear position within contemporary French society also motivates their reflection on progression from an earlier marginal status. In her periodization of specific claims made on behalf of this group, Laura Jeanne Sims outlines how political activism by children of the Harkis first emerged in France in the 1970s, when protests were centred on the camps to which many families remained confined.<sup>177</sup> Further protests in 1991 and growing claims for recognition from authorities in France also signalled a development in the position of the descendants of Harkis.<sup>178</sup> In the decades since 1962, therefore, representatives of a younger generation have consistently performed important roles in challenging the marginalization of Harkis and developing new forms of public representation. While they clearly represent a generational shift in perspectives, these texts published in 2003 also engage with the broader conditions in France of the growth in openness towards uncovering details of the conflict. Further to increased debate and recognition of colonial legacies in France – represented at official levels by the policy initiated by Chirac – Thénault identifies how a multiplication in memorial forms relating to aspects of France’s Algerian past has occurred alongside developments in historiography and research that have been aided, in particular, by increased access to archives.<sup>179</sup> Gilles Manceron equally traces developments in research on the position of this group

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<sup>176</sup> Claire Eldridge, ‘Blurring the boundaries between perpetrators and victims: *Pied-noir* memories and the *barki* community’, *Memory Studies*, 3:2 (2010), 123–36 (p. 125).

<sup>177</sup> Laura Jeanne Sims, ‘Making Sense of the Harki past: Harki History, Collective Memory, and Historiography 1954–2013’, in *A Practical Guide to French Harki Literature*, ed. by Keith Moser (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), pp. 57–81 (p. 61).

<sup>178</sup> Eldridge, “We’ve never had a voice”, p. 91.

<sup>179</sup> Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne*, p. 11.

throughout the conflict, to identify how ‘le désarmement final des harkis en 1962 apparaît en continuité avec leur utilisation par l’état-major durant la guerre comme auxiliaires, objets d’une surveillance constante’.<sup>180</sup> Beyond initial claims for specific group recognition that placed an emphasis on victimhood and abandonment, contemporary perspectives on Harki memory in France, of the sort demonstrated by the texts analysed in this chapter, have sought greater contextualization of experiences in a post-colonial contemporary society. Subsequent experiences are framed by increased awareness of the consistency of their relation to French authorities, as well as official rejection in Algeria.

### **Frames of reference for collective memory**

For those involved in Harki memory activism who seek material compensation from the French state, loyalty to France through military service is a quality that requires greater acknowledgement. Beyond the pursuit of reparations for their treatment by French authorities, accounts of Harki experiences since 1962 have also, as Lebourg identifies, involved emphasis on the need for the French state to recognize the moral fault of its policies governing former servicemen and their families.<sup>181</sup> In relation to developments in critical positions surrounding the legacies of the Algerian War for France, Stora calls for further attention to the implications raised by the emergence of social memory. He contends that ‘la mémoire de cette guerre a fait retour, massivement, dans les deux sociétés, algérienne et française, mais derrière cette guerre qui revient se dissimule un autre pan d’histoire, bien plus gigantesque, celui de la colonisation’.<sup>182</sup> The investigations pursued by Harki daughter-narrators reflect a shift in critical attention from issues of

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<sup>180</sup> Gilles Manceron, ‘Un abandon et des massacres aux responsabilités multiples’, *Les Temps Modernes*, 666 (2011), 65–89 (p. 71).

<sup>181</sup> François Béguin, “L’histoire des harkis est politique, pas ethnique ou confessionnelle”, *Le Monde*, 25 September 2012, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2012/09/25/l-histoire-des-harkis-est-politique-pas-ethnique-ou-confessionnelle\\_1765025\\_3224.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2012/09/25/l-histoire-des-harkis-est-politique-pas-ethnique-ou-confessionnelle_1765025_3224.html)> [accessed 24 November 2017].

<sup>182</sup> Benjamin Stora, ‘Quand une mémoire (de guerre) peut en cacher une autre (coloniale)’, in *La fracture coloniale: la société française au prisme de l’héritage colonial*, ed. by Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire (Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 2005), pp. 59–67 (p. 59).

loyalty and subsequent betrayal to questioning of the overall implications of the enlistment and actions of Harkis. On the issue of greater engagement at an official level in France with a renewed historiography of the conflict, Sung Choi also finds that ‘the contest over controlling the narrative about the Algerian war still limits the extent to which French leaders are willing to make historical admissions and concessions to the *harki* community’.<sup>183</sup> For Kerchouche, Rahmani, and Besnaci-Lancou, a critical framework with which to interpret specific personal and family experiences and, in turn, the collective Harki memory to which they relate, develops over the course of their respective approaches towards the mediation of memory.

The ways in which narrators gain in clarity and understanding over the course of their texts motivates their further investigations into the conditions that shaped both their parents’ plight and their own formative experiences. The series of stages that these Harki daughters pass through in their evaluations of the experiences of their families is also noted by Michèle Chossat: ‘It is a mandatory process for them to deal with the pain and the shame, the memory of atrocities, and the unfair camp conditions.’<sup>184</sup> For each narrator, recurring references in accounts of resettlement in France also aids their analysis of the restrictive conditions that French authorities imposed on families. In his anthropological study of the Harkis as a community shaped substantially by a collective memory of uprooting from Algeria, Vincent Crapanzano finds themes of betrayal to underpin accounts, to the extent that ‘were the French (or the Algerians) to apologize for their treatment of the Harkis, the Harkis’ sense of self and community (insofar as it is centred on the French refusal to apologize) would be threatened’.<sup>185</sup> However, as demonstrated by the narrators of the texts here, a broader and more nuanced perspective

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<sup>183</sup> Sung Choi, ‘The Muslim Veteran in Postcolonial France: The politics of the Integration of Harkis after 1962’, *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 29:1 (2011), 24–45 (p. 42).

<sup>184</sup> Michèle Chossat, ‘In a Nation of Indifference and Silence: Invisible Harkis, or Writing the Other’, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 11:1 (2007), 75–83 (p. 76.)

<sup>185</sup> Vincent Crapanzano, *The Harkis: The Wound that Never Heals* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 175.

is useful when revisiting experiences of resettlement. While they feature efforts to call to account those they identify as bearing responsibility for the harsh treatment of Harkis and the fate of their parents, each also presents support for a plural and reconciliatory form of remembrance.

For each of these authors, who were either born in France or moved from Algeria at a young age, direct reference to the camps and peripheral environments to which Harki families were confined shapes their critical processes of reinterpreting collective memory. As the lasting effects of experiences arising from their families' flight from Algeria remain influential, the approaches demonstrated in these texts also correspond to the dynamics of what Marianne Hirsch has termed 'postmemory', a process that 'is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection'.<sup>186</sup> For Harki daughters seeking to give voice to experiences of the parents, literature provides an effective medium in which to explore factors of postmemory. While Besnaci-Lancou and Rahmani include a degree of personal recollection, they consistently seek to relate their individual accounts to the fate of their parents and the experiences of their families. In contrast to the parents who have remained peripheral and largely unheard in France, representatives of the younger generation write from a position firmly within the Republic. The physical mobility that they possess also enables them to explore contemporary connections to Algeria and engage with new references for collective memory. Further to the ongoing social injustices affecting the Harkis that the narrators contest, aspects of memory that shape senses of belonging to a community are expressed with particular effectiveness through connections to factors of place and locality within France. In the following sections of analysis of these Harki daughter texts,

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<sup>186</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 22.

attention to the ways in which representations of space shape investigations into the past and the mobilization of memory will therefore be significant.

**Dalila Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki***

One narratorial approach particularly attuned to how dynamics of memory can be framed in relation to former sites of Harki settlement, as well as persistent conditions of exclusion in France and Algeria, is demonstrated by Dalila Kerchouche in *Mon père, ce harki* (2003). The text presents an account of the author's process of recovering family memory and engaging with the long-term silence of her father. As she was born in France, at the point when her family was finally moving out of the system of camps, she works to gather and connect accounts from diverse members of her family. The self-appointed role of the youngest daughter is therefore that of investigator. At the outset, Kerchouche states a sense of exclusion from her family's experiences of settlement in France. Through her account, however, she aims 'abolir cette frontière' and 'toucher du doigt ce passé que je n'ai pas vécu'.<sup>187</sup> Obtaining a clear connection to this past is, for Kerchouche, essential for a full understanding of her own position. The process that she presents of simultaneously coming to voice as an individual and giving voice to others previously characterized by their silence provides an example of the significant dynamics of a generational shift in the genre that Sutherland terms 'collecto-biography'. The individual's exploration of memory necessarily reflects more broadly on the Harki community as, for Sutherland, 'each writer's entire identity has been shaped by their status as the child of a Harki'.<sup>188</sup> As Kerchouche considers issues of group identity and belonging for the Harki community in France, she starts with an assessment of the burden of her own inheritance. She explains, for example, how she has long been tentative in her approach towards Harki memory and its implications: 'Je suis une fille de

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<sup>187</sup> Dalila Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2003), p. 26.

<sup>188</sup> Sutherland, 'Harki Autobiographies or Collecto-Biographies?', p. 196.

harkis. J'écris ce mot avec un petit "h", comme honte.<sup>189</sup> The purpose of her investigation into her family is therefore to attempt to overcome this sense of stigma and to establish a clearer and more positive means of expression.

In addition to their determination to make their voices heard, the descendants of Harkis who narrate these texts also question the socio-political factors that underpin the long-term marginalization of this population. The role of the members of a generation that was raised in France in affirming a visible position in society and a strong critical voice is also identified by Lila Ibrahim-Lamrous as a significant factor in advances in the representation of collective memory, as the Harki community has long been 'mutique plutôt qu'amnésique'.<sup>190</sup> The lack of a means of expression also imposed a sense of stigma in France on individuals. Kerchouche notably describes how, without a clear means of expression of this past away from polarised attitudes, she has perceived her background as the child of a Harki family in France as 'ma fêlure intime, mon chagrin secret'.<sup>191</sup> While she is motivated to challenge and overcome this status, she also investigates her origins. As Moumen emphasises, 'if Harki literature can only be understood in its historical context, the conditions in which the second generation emerged also undeniably constitute an additional key for understanding this literary production'.<sup>192</sup> As she attempts to achieve more positive self-identification, Kerchouche pays particularly close attention to the physical spaces and geographical locations that frame Harki experiences. Over the course of the text she visits each of the camps inhabited by her parents and siblings: 'Ils ont traversé six camps disséminés en France, en un trajet qui forme comme une étoile sur la carte de France'.<sup>193</sup> Her own perspective on

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<sup>189</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 13.

<sup>190</sup> Lila Ibrahim-Lamrous, 'Mon père, ce harki' de Dalila Kerchouche: une posture testimoniale ambiguë pour dire la guerre d'Algérie', *Expressions Maghrébines*, 11:2 (2012), 177–91 (p. 182).

<sup>191</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 14.

<sup>192</sup> Abderahmen Moumen, '1962-2014: The Historical Construction of Harki Literature', in *A Practical Guide to French Harki Literature*, ed. by Keith Moser (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), pp. 1–15 (p. 7).

<sup>193</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 26.

how the marginal status of Harkis was shaped by these locations is a starting point, as she was born in the last of these camps. By working from the family's arrival in France in 1962, she acquires a greater understanding of her experiences over the course of her itinerary around France. The conditions of initial resettlement for Harkis are also identified by Géraldine Enjelvin as particularly relevant to their experiences of marginalization: 'À leur arrivée en France, de nombreux harkis n'eurent que le camp et leur famille comme unités sociales de référence.'<sup>194</sup> For Kerchouche, the memory that she seeks to recover and interpret is tied closely to physical space. Her method of travelling to each of the locations relevant to her family leads to a cumulative gain in understanding of their difficulties and enables reconstruction of the experiences that have shaped Harki perspectives.

As she develops a spatial framework, Kerchouche's critical perspective is aided by her mobility. The position from which she investigates also enables her to reconstruct her family's movements, as she explains how 'je n'en garde aucun souvenir'.<sup>195</sup> This distanced perspective thus informs her interpretations of the experiences that she uncovers and supports her position in acting on behalf of her parents. She also describes how, as she was born at the very end of the family's time in the camps, '... mes frères et sœurs plus âgés me traitent souvent de "privilégiée." Eux ont connu les "camps". Pas moi.'<sup>196</sup> The journey to each of the camps and the recovery of memories associated with a given location also serves to sharpen her critical perspective. In his study of Harki experiences and collective memory, Crapanzano highlights how the issue of French abandonment by authorities, combined with a sense of powerlessness in response to events, recurs in

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<sup>194</sup> Géraldine Enjelvin, 'Les Harkis en France: Carte d'identité française, identité harkie à la carte', *Modern & Contemporary France*, 11:2 (2003), 161–73 (p. 164).

<sup>195</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 25.

<sup>196</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 26.

narratives of flight from Algeria as ‘an insistent leitmotif’.<sup>197</sup> In the case of Kerchouche, the family’s experience of resettlement policies imposed by French authorities after their escape from Algeria in 1962 is framed starkly in retrospect as a form of punishment and prison sentence, as the family spent ‘pratiquement douze ans parquée derrière des barbelés’.<sup>198</sup> Over the course of the text, however, she consistently seeks to avoid repeating claims of victimization and instead favours placing emphasis on agency in responses to confinement. In her investigation into these conditions, Kerchouche explores both the physical locations of this confinement and the conditions of the family’s experiences. During her visits to several sites, it is the investigatory work on the ground and connections forged in physical space that Kerchouche prioritizes, as it serves to most effectively join together personal and collective experiences. In relation to this employment of spatial reference, Jennifer Howell notes how Kerchouche ‘espère déterrer une architecture mémorielle harkie cachée dans les annales de l’histoire et dans la mémoire collective’.<sup>199</sup> Bringing Harki memory to greater prominence and demonstrating its firm rooting in the geography of France is achieved by Kerchouche through her role as both observer and investigator. In moving between past and present in this way, with reconstruction of family memory framed by reference to place, she also sets the experiences of her family in a broader context of the French state’s administration of decolonization.

Kerchouche outlines the remit of her investigation with an initial process of self-analysis. She feels a need for greater clarity in order to move beyond the persistent uncertainties over belonging for the generation of descendants of Harkis raised in France: ‘Algérienne qui déteste les harkis et Française sans racines, j’oscille entre ces deux parties de mon être

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<sup>197</sup> Crapanzano, *The Harkis: The Wound that Never Heals*, p. 83.

<sup>198</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 26.

<sup>199</sup> Jennifer Howell, ‘Sur les traces d’un père: “La quête Harkéologique” de Dalila Kerchouche’, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 15:4 (2011), 415–22 (p. 416).



qui se battent, se déchirent, comme si une grenade avait explosé dans ma tête, comme si la guerre d'Algérie, en moi, n'en finissait pas.<sup>200</sup> In pursuing this approach, Kerchouche also draws on her own responses to the memories and details that she uncovers. For Ibrahim-Lamrous, this places Kerchouche in a significant position of interpretation: 'sans être témoin oculaire, présent sur les lieux du drame, elle est victime des conséquences de cette guerre.'<sup>201</sup> In response to his long-term silence and reluctance to engage with painful accounts of the past, Kerchouche sets out her aim to connect with her father by assessing his experiences and efforts to establish independence for the family 'au cours d'un voyage géographique et temporel'.<sup>202</sup> Where the silence of her father and its consequent difficulties for the transmission of memory is a major obstacle, her mother has, by contrast, long been 'avide de confier ses tourments'.<sup>203</sup> As she approaches her mother as a crucial source of testimony, Kerchouche establishes details that combine with her own investigations to establish a clearer and more coherent account of the family's experiences. In practice, Kerchouche therefore employs a hybrid form, as she connects her personal reflections in the present to reconstructions based on the testimonies that she acquires from family members. Olsson also captures how, through these efforts to break silence and recover memories, Kerchouche makes effective use of the perspective that her mobility affords her, as she 'endeavors to enter into a sort of time warp letting places and various histories transform her into a vessel for "voices" of the past'.<sup>204</sup> As she sets out on her journey around the locations of the camps in France, Kerchouche describes how her style enables her 'errer autour des miens, invisible, omnisciente, cheminer autour d'eux comme un fantôme du futur'.<sup>205</sup> This flexibility and

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<sup>200</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 31.

<sup>201</sup> Ibrahim-Lamrous, 'Mon père, ce harki de Dalila Kerchouche', p. 180.

<sup>202</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 33.

<sup>203</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 25.

<sup>204</sup> Olsson, 'In the Name of the Father: In the Voice of the Other', p. 150.

<sup>205</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 33.

freedom of movement is therefore crucial to an evaluation of the family and the performance of her self-appointed role of investigator and mediator of memory.

The way in which Kerchouche shifts between encounters in the present and details of life at each of the former camps supports her efforts to gain greater clarity on the progression of her family's status in France. She observes a particular tension between efforts made by the family at integration into French society and the consistent obstruction imposed by policies governing the Harkis. She traces, for example, her mother's efforts to run a functioning family household and establish a degree of independence within the system of camps. Her assessment is informed, moreover, by the discoveries that she makes during her archival investigations into the welfare of which they and other families were deprived. The narrator's frustration and anger combine in this instance with her sense of responsibility to act on behalf of her parents: 'Si seulement j'avais été là... J'aurais pu dire à ma pauvre mère ce qu'elle ignorait alors.'<sup>206</sup> Such reconstructions and contextualization also enable Kerchouche to advance her understanding through what she identifies as her technique of 'télescopage entre le passé et le présent'.<sup>207</sup> In this process of establishing a clear perspective on her family's formative experiences, the oral testimonies that she obtains are particularly valuable to the narrator. In addition to the foundations of an 'architecture mémorielle' of Harki resettlement in France, Howell establishes how 'la quête harkéologique de Kerchouche s'enrichit grâce au dialogue et montre que la communauté harkie est certes cachée, mais pas oubliée'.<sup>208</sup> The narrator indeed moves beyond confinement of Harki memories to develop a clearer and more positive sense of belonging. The discovery of witnesses and people with a direct connection to her parents is significant here. This occurs, for example, through an encounter with a neighbour who helped Kerchouche's parents

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<sup>206</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 101

<sup>207</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 102

<sup>208</sup> Howell, 'Sur les traces d'un père', p. 421.

while they were living in a forestry camp. The establishment of a direct, personal connection aids her efforts of reconstruction, as the memories of this Frenchwoman recalling the Harkis fondly ‘matérialisent brusquement mon père et ma mère’.<sup>209</sup> Having gained these details, Kerchouche’s efforts to explore further are based on her desire to understand the choices available to her parents and their responses to lasting confinement in the camps. In his focus on themes of betrayal and loss in Harki collective memory, Crapanzano finds that where accounts feature references to kindness on the part of French people during time spent in camps, they serve as pointed exceptions to an overarching climate of hostility.<sup>210</sup> The existence of such forms of co-operation is echoed in Kerchouche’s text. In a manner consistent with her interest in questioning the persistence of claims of powerless suffering and victimization, she therefore seeks to challenge notions of stark divisions between Harkis and a metropolitan French population.

Where Kerchouche uncovers details of her family’s experiences in each of the locations, she gains understanding over the course of the text of the long-term injustices and marginalization that they have endured. As the encounter with people with a connection to her parents aids her investigation, she likewise feels a need to continue acting on their behalf by taking their case to those she deems responsible for their treatment: ‘Depuis le début de mon voyage, d’étape en étape, je sens la rage monter en moi.’<sup>211</sup> Her anger is focused, for example, in the account leading up to a confrontation with the former *pied-noir* commander of one of the camps (Mouans-Sartoux in the *département* of Alpes-Maritimes), who is noted for his harsh treatment of Harkis and continuity with the colonial order imposed in Algeria. A particular form of symbolic violence was represented in the widespread practice of assigning French names to Harki children. In

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<sup>209</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 73.

<sup>210</sup> Crapanzano, *The Harkis: The Wound that Never Heals*, pp. 129–30.

<sup>211</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 106.

cutting off Algerian origins in this way, Kerchouche finds, ‘il s’agit d’assimilation forcée’.<sup>212</sup> In the specific case concerning Kerchouche’s mother, a ban was imposed on headscarves and Algerian cultural practices. Faced with the former commander’s unapologetic attitude towards this policy and overall perspective on the treatment of Harki families during the meeting that she had initially organized as an interview, Kerchouche finds that ‘je me rends compte que chacune de ses phrases résonne en moi, se répercute aux récits de mes parents’.<sup>213</sup> This encounter is a significant stage in the process she identifies of working to interpret the conditions that shaped the perspective of her parents and the problems of dealing with her own inheritance. Furthermore, a cathartic moment for Kerchouche in this exchange occurs when she reveals her identity to the former commander and forces him to recognize the lasting effects of the control he imposed.

As Kerchouche presents her gradual advances in understanding of her family’s experiences, her process of addressing this past also becomes increasingly problematic in its personal implication. The final camp in her itinerary around France, at Bias (Lot-et-Garonne), is the narrator’s own birthplace. As she spent her childhood in the surrounding area, where the family had settled after gaining independence from the system of camps, Kerchouche identifies how she benefited from a definitive rupture and eventually positive integration: ‘J’ai vécu à des années-lumière de ce sombre passé, que j’ai oublié, renié, occulté. J’ai fui et enfoui Bias dans le tréfonds de ma mémoire tourmentée’.<sup>214</sup> In addition to these negative associations, the camp at Bias had specific carceral qualities, in contrast to the forestry settlements tied to the father’s employment, where the family had also lived. Kerchouche identifies the family’s challenge to authority figures, including the commander at Mouans-Sartoux, as having been punished by their

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<sup>212</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 106.

<sup>213</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 113.

<sup>214</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 130.

redeployment to this camp, which had ‘une vocation médico-sociale et recueille tous les harkis “irrécupérables”, inexploitable par les Eaux et Forêts’.<sup>215</sup> The awareness of an inherited stigma from which Kerchouche must progress therefore remains central. In her approach, Kerchouche confronts what she identifies as the social relegation of Harkis and contradictions to values of the Republic at this site: ‘Les valeurs de liberté, d’égalité et de fraternité n’existent pas dans cet univers totalitaire où les harkis vivent entre embrigadement et répression.’<sup>216</sup> The process of retracing her parents’ actions to challenge these conditions is particularly significant, as she emphasizes the agency and determination required in order to break with the structures experienced in the camp.

After charting the itinerary of her family around camps and forestry settlements in France before it eventually gained independence, Kerchouche’s approach to investigating her family leads her to return to her parents. In spite of her concern for the transmission of memory, however, the perspective gained raises further questions regarding her own inheritance: ‘Pourquoi?’ is her recurring question, applied to every aspect of experiences.<sup>217</sup> Faced with a lack of answers to provide a clear resolution to tensions in France, Kerchouche therefore turns to Algeria in order to address the transformation of her father’s status that forms the very basis of the family’s position. Where her investigatory journey around an itinerary of sites in France showed the significance of geographical reference to framing issues of memory, Kerchouche’s attention to space and its connections takes on a further critical approach in the following section. She approaches Algeria as the site of a rupture and transformation, the effects of which she continues to negotiate, as she sets out with awareness of how ‘c’est là-bas que la vie de ma famille a basculé... Là-bas, aussi, que je poursuis, après les camps, ma quête

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<sup>215</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 136.

<sup>216</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 139.

<sup>217</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 183.

“harkéologique” dans le passé, mon voyage à la source du drame’.<sup>218</sup> As with her interpretations drawn from charting an itinerary around France, this mobility enables Kerchouche to engage with specific dynamics of family memory and assess their relevance to her own perspective. After crossing a spatial and symbolic division from France to Algeria, the navigation of geographical space and the further leads that it can provide in investigating the past are central to the process of obtaining clarity.

Kerchouche’s method of uncovering traces of the past in Algeria is particularly relevant to her overall approach involving an assessment of personal and family history in relation to a broader structure of imbalanced social relations. In particular, the transformational point of Kerchouche’s father becoming a Harki — with the irreversible fate and consequences for the family this would later provoke — is explained by the family’s circumstances and the financial incentive of short-term enlistment with French forces: ‘Il ne sait pas, au moment où il appose une croix en guise de paraphe au bas de son contrat, qu’il devient un “harki”, un traître à une cause qu’il ne connaît pas et qui le dépasse.’<sup>219</sup>

As with her visits to the sites of camps in France, Kerchouche is the key actor enabling the transmission of memory. The way in which she gathers testimonies and uncovers details of her family history during this visit to Algeria notably takes the form of a series of encounters with male relatives. In particular, the discovery of an uncle proves crucial to the process of reinterpreting and challenging the divisions between those who sided temporarily with the French, such as her father, and others who remained in Algeria but had shown little commitment to either camp. Further to this sense of distance from the binary oppositions with which the conflict and its legacies have been framed, a revelation comes from the uncle’s account of how Kerchouche’s father aided the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) while serving as a Harki, reflecting his solidarities at a specific local

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<sup>218</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 201.

<sup>219</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 246.

level.<sup>220</sup> With this discovery of a personal action, senses of rupture and divisions on a broader scale are also called into question. Through the gathering of testimony from those with connections to her father, Kerchouche discovers how pragmatism and interests in survival were more significant than loyalty to either side in experiences of the war. In this respect, Kerchouche's investigation resonates with Evans's findings, namely that, for many of those caught between sides during the conflict, 'commitment and opposition co-existed with hesitation, compromise, and ambiguous behaviour'.<sup>221</sup> Working on the level of family memory further contributes to a shift in perspectives on a broader context, as she seeks to progress from her discovery that 'il n'y a ni traîtres ni héros dans cette histoire, comme on a voulu me le faire croire'.<sup>222</sup> By the time of her return to France, the generational dynamic motivating Kerchouche's examination of the family past is at its sharpest, as her discoveries in Algeria force her father to eventually break his silence.

Kerchouche overall presents an account of self-transformation and the development of a clear critical perspective. At the outset, her sense of stigma (her 'fêlure intime') of identity as the daughter of a Harki was perpetuated by a lack of clarity over her inheritance and connections to a broader family history. By the end of her text, however, she has obtained new details and testimonies from her father and other relatives. This enables her to affirm a far more positive identity and sense of belonging in both France and Algeria: 'Oui, je suis une fille de harkis. J'écris ce mot avec un grand H. Comme Honneur'.<sup>223</sup> This new certainty for the narrator is the result of the hybrid style that she employs, which combines testimony and self-analysis, in addition to her representation of physical mobility. This repeated switching is important, as Howell finds: 'le livre de

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<sup>220</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 256.

<sup>221</sup> Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War*, p. 255.

<sup>222</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 275.

<sup>223</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 277.

Kerchouche oscille entre histoire et mémoire, entre archive et postmémoire.<sup>224</sup> The conceptualization of physical space tied to memory is also crucial to the narrator's efforts to frame her personal and familial connections to a broader history of the fate of Harkis in France. In the conclusion to *Mon père, ce Harki*, Kerchouche describes the contribution of her text to the representation of Harki memory as 'une faille ouverte dans le passé, une petite résistance contre le rouleau compresseur de l'Histoire'.<sup>225</sup> The practical action of her individual process of exploring memory is therefore to present a renewed engagement with the past and the disruption of previous perspectives. In achieving this resolution, as Ibrahim-Lamrous summarizes, Kerchouche's style is open to a range of voices and viewpoints: 'Le texte final est une mosaïque constituée des fragments disparates de multiples discours qui ont des statuts différents, complémentaires, concurrents'.<sup>226</sup> The narrator's mobility and ability to piece together different perspectives and reference points are crucial to the reinterpretation that she carries out.

*Moze* by Zahia Rahmani, on which analysis will focus in the following section, also features a narrator who assesses the fate of her father and questions her own position as the daughter of a Harki. As with Kerchouche, the process of writing is framed by an attempt to break with the marginal status of the Harkis and to emphasize a visible and critical presence in contemporary France. As Keith Moser highlights, in their concern for a clear voice to challenge the consistent social relegation of the Harkis, the works of both Kerchouche and Rahmani are 'texts that take aim at the deleterious effects of this administrative muteness'.<sup>227</sup> However, where Kerchouche focuses on charting memory in relation to place and developing a means of breaking her father's silence, Rahmani's text centres on an investigation into the factors that contributed to her father's death. For

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<sup>224</sup> Howell, 'Sur les traces d'un père', p. 421.

<sup>225</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 277.

<sup>226</sup> Ibrahim-Lamrous, 'Mon père, ce harki de Dalila Kerchouche', p. 186.

<sup>227</sup> Keith Moser, 'Two Literary Texts that Concretize the Goals of the "Harki Spring": Taking Aim at the Nefarious Effects of Institutional Silence', in *A Practical Guide to French Harki Literature*, ed. by Keith Moser (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), pp. 169–86 (p. 171).



Susan Ireland, the processes of questioning memory and legacies of the treatment of the Harkis carried out by Kerchouche and Rahmani respectively ‘constitute important counter-narratives that contest the dominant accounts of the war circulating in France and Algeria, and take their place alongside the parallel, often competing memories of other groups’.<sup>228</sup> The challenges that these narrators present to prevailing forms of Harki collective memory in the public domain are particularly significant when they seek to develop a clear critical position and emphasise their agency in contrast to a persistent victim status.

Both authors are concerned overall with establishing an effective form for interpreting the problematic Harki past that is attuned to specific family memory, as well as framing wider experiences as a population in France. The act of speaking on behalf of the father carried out in these works requires clear engagement with the continued marginality of the Harkis and the corresponding difficulty of placing this group in France into a broadened historical account. The importance that narrators attach to contextualization is identified by Olsson as part of efforts to trace continuities in social relations: ‘It is not only the alleged betrayal of the fathers that is at stake, but also the prolonging of hegemonic (post) colonial structures.’<sup>229</sup> Kerchouche does not therefore simply table a case regarding betrayal by France but, instead, seeks to establish clear connections in the present. Her representation of memory in relation to geographical locations is also crucial for the way in which it supports her cumulative gain in understanding. *Moʒe* features a series of imagined dialogues centred on establishing a response to the factors that led to the father’s suicide. Through this form, Ireland finds that ‘Rahmani employs a fragmented, experimental style which serves to convey the psychological distress and the

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<sup>228</sup> Susan Ireland, ‘Facing the Ghosts of the Past in Dalila Kerchouche’s *Mon père, ce Harki* and Zahia Rahmani’s *Moʒe*’, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 13:3 (2009), 303–10 (p. 303).

<sup>229</sup> Olsson, ‘In the Name of the Father: In the Voice of the Other’, p. 145.

dissolution of the self caused by the harkis' experiences'.<sup>230</sup> Where Kerchouche is able to question her parents and alter her perspective throughout her text, the specific motivation for Rahmani's narrator to launch an investigation is the death of the father. From the starting point of mourning after the father's suicide, the narrator describes a figure weighed down by consequences of the past: 'C'est arrivé le 11 Novembre. Mais c'est venu bien avant. Vivant, il était mort.'<sup>231</sup> *Moze* therefore follows the trajectory of the narrator as she works to resolve tensions surrounding personal connections and, subsequently, calls into question the broader position of Harki memory in France.

### **Zahia Rahmani, *Moze***

Throughout *Moze*, the narrator assesses the tragic fate of her father and attempts to situate his death in a broader context of the treatment of Harkis in France and Algeria. She is motivated, in particular, to force greater recognition from the French state regarding its policies on former servicemen. As with the generational shift in perspective that underlies the critical thrust of Kerchouche's text, Rahmani carries out a wide-ranging reflection on the status of the Harkis in France and draws on both her personal experiences and those of her family. In both works, the investigations that these daughters carry out are notably more probing and complex than studies previously pursued in historiography. In the earlier work of Hamoumou, for example, the marginal status of Harkis was attributed to a betrayal by France and abandonment to independent Algeria. This account emphasised the suffering of these men, but provided little ground for consideration of their own agency or means of response.<sup>232</sup> Faced with the course of events over which her father is shown to have had little control, Rahmani's text challenges the treatment of the Harkis by both French and Algerian sides, yet equally

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<sup>230</sup> Ireland, 'Facing the Ghosts of the Past', p. 307.

<sup>231</sup> Zahia Rahmani, *Moze* (Paris: Sabine Wespieser, 2003), p. 19.

<sup>232</sup> See Hamoumou, *Et ils sont devenus harkis*, p. 20.

calls for a more nuanced understanding of events. Much of the difficulty for the narrators to understand and access the past experienced at the outset of the works of both Kerchouche and Rahmani is founded on the absence of first-hand accounts and the necessity of recovering memory from the cover of silence. In this respect, Rahmani's text does follow, in broad terms, the necessary process that Hamoumou termed a 'travail de dévoilement'.<sup>233</sup> Beyond this effort to obtain clarity and a definitive settlement on the status of Harkis and their descendants, however, *Mozè* also pursues critical questioning of the tensions that persist in the post-colonial connections between France and Algeria. In his study of Harki collective memory, Crapanzano identifies how the pursuit of legal justice has become central to Harki memory activism. Accordingly, campaigns are focused on central government and call for the French state to recognize its responsibilities towards Harkis and their families.<sup>234</sup> While she presents a range of claims against French authorities, the narrator of Rahmani's text, who acts as her father's advocate, is interested above all by setting his experiences in a clear historical context. In this regard, it also demonstrates the significance, as identified by Laura Reeck, of the forms of testimony that Harki daughters gather on behalf of their parents: 'Testimony is the means by which the singular can be extracted from the collective, thus giving voice to individual experience, and by which historical narrative confronts the human experience.'<sup>235</sup> In *Mozè*, the daughter's efforts to compile evidence are an essential part of the role that she performs as an advocate for her father. As with other daughter-narrators, moreover, raising awareness of the effects of the policies that governed Harkis involves greater explanation of their lasting effects.

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<sup>233</sup> Hamoumou, *Et ils sont devenus harkis*, p. 19.

<sup>234</sup> Crapanzano, *The Harkis: The Wound that Never Heals*, p. 157.

<sup>235</sup> Laura Reeck, 'Autofictional Testimony: Writing in Place of the Father in Zahia Rahmani's *Mozè*', in *A Practical Guide to French Harki Literature*, ed. by Keith Moser (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), pp. 125–43 (p. 126).

In a manner consistent with her perception that Harkis and their families were a post-colonial burden transferred from France to Algeria in 1962, the narrator relates the persistently marginal status of this population to an inability of the French state to engage fully with the consequences and legacies of colonialism. At the outset, she explains her motivation to interrogate ‘le système qui permet à l’État français de fabriquer une armée de soldatsmorts’.<sup>236</sup> Where she seeks to investigate and gain clarity on the fate of Harkis, as Reeck notes, ‘Rahmani constructs a remarkably complex textuality in an elegiac homage to her father’.<sup>237</sup> In addition to the coining of neologism (‘soldatmort’) and her confrontational attitude towards representatives of the French state, the narrator also regularly employs repetition to emphasize her arguments. Her approach towards her father involves studying him as one individual in a broader, obscured history which involves, for example, the subject of the massacres of Harkis in Algeria in the immediate aftermath of independence: ‘Il y a eu des milliers de corps perdus. Et aussi 100,000 voire 150,000 corps tués. Morts obligés, morts méprisés, morts dans le silence, morts dans la honte.’<sup>238</sup> The narrator’s awareness of a passive status and the lasting effects of stigmatization are also significant to perspectives on the rejection experienced by Harkis and their families in both France and Algeria, as she describes the indeterminate status that defined her father and which she herself must negotiate: ‘Harki est sa peine, celle qui l’assigne ici, qui lui interdit l’ailleurs.’<sup>239</sup> The role that she identifies for herself in speaking on her father’s behalf therefore arises out of a desire to break with such a condition and, moreover, to make her own critical voice heard.

From the prominence accorded by Rahmani to the voice of the daughter presenting a testimony and building a case against France for its treatment of Harkis, her process of

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<sup>236</sup> Rahmani, *Mozè*, p. 20.

<sup>237</sup> Reeck, ‘Autofictional Testimony’, p. 131.

<sup>238</sup> Rahmani, *Mozè*, p. 20.

<sup>239</sup> Rahmani, *Mozè*, p. 22.

investigation into family history is equally important as that carried out by Kerchouche. As they both involve charting the trajectory of the parents to understand their formative experiences, the process of ‘postmemory’, as defined by Hirsch, is particularly relevant. In *Moʒe*, this forms a central aspect of the narrator’s efforts to act on behalf of the father and interpret his alienation in relation to her own problematic position as a member of the younger generation. As Hirsch explains her concept, revisiting the fate of others can have the same urgency and intensity as direct personal experience, as ‘postmemory – often obsessive and relentless – need not be absent or evacuated’.<sup>240</sup> Rahmani’s style throughout the novel reflects on the development of the daughter’s perspective and the greater understanding that she gains through a series of exchanges and dialogues. While Hirsch’s concept involves a form of distance and separation as a starting point from which a process of reimagining memory is enacted, something that is clearly carried out by Kerchouche as the youngest member of her family, Rahmani does have some room for direct personal recollection, as she moved from Algeria with her family while her father was imprisoned.<sup>241</sup> For Alison Rice, in this context of personal and collective memory addressed by Rahmani, ‘the written text allows her [...] to find words for the distress her father was never able to articulate’.<sup>242</sup> Her focus, nonetheless, is on origins and her own position in France as a consequence of that held by her father.

As Kerchouche charts the difficulties imposed by the inheritance of Harki perspectives and awareness of their implications, Rahmani also struggles with self-identification when confronting the father’s status: ‘Harki est le mot pacte qui le désigne. Ce mot que ses enfants doivent dire, pour dire qu’ils sont ici par ce père qui l’est’.<sup>243</sup> Above all, a sense of stigma remains important, as she attempts to obtain a degree of dignity for her father. As

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<sup>240</sup> Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, p. 22.

<sup>241</sup> Sabrinelle Bedrane, ‘Beneath the Underdog: La trilogie de Zahia Rahmani’, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 16:5 (2012), 655–63 (p. 656).

<sup>242</sup> Alison Rice, *Polygraphies: Francophone Women Writing Algeria* (Charlottesville & London: University of Virginia Press, 2012), p. 20.

<sup>243</sup> Rahmani, *Moʒe*, p. 22.

with Kerchouche's reference to sensitivity to her 'fêlure intime', Rahmani's description of an inherited marginality and sense of powerlessness is shown to be at the centre of her own problematic definition of identity: 'La faute de Moze, je veux dire qu'elle est ma chair et mon habit.'<sup>244</sup> This establishes a dynamic central to both of these second-generation texts, namely interpreting the burden passed on to the children due to the structural problems of their position in France, and responding by speaking simultaneously as both an individual and on behalf of the father. Taking as its starting point the father's suicide in 1991, the first section of *Moze* is framed as an exchange with a police officer investigating the circumstances of the death. From this, Rahmani works to broaden the grounds for investigation and turns, in response, to interrogate France's treatment of the Harkis and the three decades of marginalization that shaped Moze's condition. The procedural form of the investigation and the requirement to hear the voices of those around Moze therefore becomes a major theme in the pursuit of greater clarity. Throughout the text, the particular importance attached to conversation and modes of dialogue indicates a need to gather evidence of Moze's experience. In her concern for the responsibility of negotiating her inheritance, the daughter displays further awareness of representation on the father's behalf: 'mais je rappelle, étant sa fille, que je suis aussi ce qui est venu par lui et qui le continue.'<sup>245</sup> This pursuit of recognition by the daughter, identified in line with the process of postmemory, is therefore suggested to be one of necessity.

Over the course of the text, Rahmani conveys the range of different parties and interlocutors that the narrator encounters in efforts to address her father's fate and to obtain a clear settlement. The process of recording factors that contributed to his death and presenting a case to challenge French authorities is notable, in particular, for the

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<sup>244</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 24.

<sup>245</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 24.

reproduction within the text of bureaucratic documents. In the first section, which covers the investigation into the circumstances of Moze's death, the accounts of the daughter and other family members are interspersed with references to administrative documents and French government policies that had an effect on Harki families. Most significantly, this includes a copy of the telegram sent in May 1962 by the French government minister Louis Joxe, recommending a policy that would forbid any aid for Harkis and their families to seek refuge in France.<sup>246</sup> This archival reference has an increased critical effect when related directly to testimony that she gathers and uses as evidence. For Thénault, the Joxe telegram and the intentions of the French state it indicated can also be placed in a broader context of official underestimates of the number of Harkis to be managed and the severity of their position at the moment of decolonization in 1962.<sup>247</sup> The narrator sets the Joxe telegram in counterpoint to her account of her own arrival in France. Having succeeded in escaping Algeria after her father's imprisonment in 1962 and claiming a right to resettlement in France, the family were entered into the administrative system that managed the Harki population.<sup>248</sup> This marks a further important stage in the account of the family's fate, as internment in a camp was their first experience of France. The shock of arrival in the camp and the experience of its carceral conditions are described in direct terms: 'Je ne vois pas d'arbre. Il faisait chaud...Des lits en fer et des nuits sans sommeil.'<sup>249</sup> Although the camps do not go on to serve as a major reference point in the present in Rahmani's account to the same extent they do for Kerchouche, relation to place has nonetheless greatly marked the narrator's perspective.

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<sup>246</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 42.

<sup>247</sup> Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, p. 258.

<sup>248</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 41.

<sup>249</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 41.

Following this initial treatment and eventual family reunion, policies that confined Harki families to peripheries are shown by the narrator to have continued long after the camps, as she explains a consistent feeling of frustrations arising from dealings with bureaucracy. Her father, for example, attempted to obtain the benefits to which the family was entitled, but was continually left frustrated by the very structures developed to deal with this group. The narrator recounts these experiences in a particularly bitter tone: ‘Pour eux, on a créé une administration, le service des harkis au secrétariat d’Etat aux rapatriés. C’est le bureau des chiens.’<sup>250</sup> Other autobiographical elements from Rahmani feature throughout this section, notably in the account of eventual resettlement in Beauvais (*département* of Oise), north of Paris.<sup>251</sup> This geographical reference indicates how Harki families were dispersed across France beyond the system of camps, with their resettlement dependent on the father’s employment. In light of this enforced movement around consistently marginal spaces, something also found by Kerchouche to be a common aspect of Harki experiences, the voice of the daughter further condemns France’s post-colonial policy of forgetting that reinforced separation in 1962: ‘La métropole pouvait dormir. Oublier cette chose nationale, ce département qu’on voulait à soi encore.’<sup>252</sup> With this focus on the figure of the father and the implications raised by his death, for Moser, ‘Rahmani convincingly contends that the Harkis will continue to be spectres on the periphery of society until the manner in which the official master narrative of France is written changes’.<sup>253</sup> In this representation of the pursuit of justice and greater recognition from the French state, Rahmani’s use of the figure of the dead father also provides an exemplar of the theme of haunting identified by Fiona Barclay in her study of the traces of unresolved legacies of France’s colonial past. For Barclay, haunting is evident in contemporary narratives and ‘exclusion is a recurring motif, a

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<sup>250</sup> Rahmani, *Mosze*, p. 53.

<sup>251</sup> Rahmani, *Mosze*, pp. 49–50.

<sup>252</sup> Rahmani, *Mosze*, p. 43.

<sup>253</sup> Moser, ‘Two Literary Texts that concretize the goals of the “Harki Spring”’, p. 175.



marker which regulates the haunting economy of the spectral'.<sup>254</sup> In their respective approaches towards exploring and questioning the sources of persistent tension, both Rahmani and Kerchouche find strong reason for France to be haunted due to what they identify as the continued inadequacy of the representation of Harki memory in the public sphere. In arguing for the greater accommodation of individual spectres such as that of her father, it is the lack of an effective structure, either political or commemorative, that Rahmani seeks to challenge.

The development of the text involves charting the daughter's process of compiling evidence in order to present a convincing case on behalf of her father. A range of conversations and the perspectives that she gathers enable her to call into question the conditions experienced by Harkis. For Laura Reeck, '*Moze* can be seen to test the laws of hospitality as they relate to the *harkis* in segments of texts turning on a juridico-legal vocabulary'.<sup>255</sup> In this context, the daughter's action as a proxy for the father is essential, and her own process of reinterpreting his experiences takes on a particular intensity as she finds that, as a result of her investigations, 'J'ai maintenant la même écriture que Moze'.<sup>256</sup> Further to this motivation to act in ways that the parents could not, she aims to make particular use of this resemblance to her father by obtaining legal or official redress and pursuing those responsible for the course of events that affected him and, by consequence, the entire family: 'Je pourrai refaire toutes ses lettres, les falsifier [...] Devenir un fantôme, un fantôme qui aurait compris ce qu'il a à faire, un soldat mort revenu de la mort!'<sup>257</sup> Rice also identifies how, in this instance, the second-generation narrator feels a responsibility to make effective use of their position and perspective in France: 'In literary form, the daughter uses her signature that is the father's in order to

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<sup>254</sup> Fiona Barclay, *Writing Postcolonial France: Haunting, Literature and the Maghreb* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), p. xi.

<sup>255</sup> Laura Reeck, 'The Law/Laws of Hospitality chez Zahia Rahmani', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 17:1 (2013), 80–88 (p. 82).

<sup>256</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 77.

<sup>257</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 77.

call attention to the injustices he suffered.<sup>258</sup> The major themes of inheritance and the recovery of memory common to the approaches of Harki daughters are central here, as she is determined to ensure that her father is remembered in order to clarify her own position. This also relates to Kerchouche's intention to make use of the position afforded by her investigation and to work retroactively in the interests of her family.

Where Kerchouche pursued her 'quête harkéologique' by travelling to Algeria in order to break silence and challenge persistent fractures through reconciliation, Rahmani also identifies a re-establishment of connections between former colonial centre and periphery as essential for advances in her work of assessing memory. Following her direct adoption of the position of advocate for the father, the second section of *Moze* adopts a further form of contestation. It represents a dialogue between the narrator and her sister based on a return to Algeria and an attempt to have the father buried there, in spite of his official rejection. A formal burial is required not only to complete the process of mourning, but also to accord him a clear place in relation to the past. This imagined dialogue between Moze's daughters on his burial reflects on the symbolism of gestures and their power of response. There is particular criticism of the classification of Harkis as victims of history, as the daughter refuses their measurement simply by the numbers of dead and imprisoned. Quantifying the severity of the Harki experience to emphasise a victim status is not found to aid any individual process of mourning. Regardless of the figure employed, she finds that: 'Ils nous emmerdent avec les chiffres!'<sup>259</sup> As with the number of men condemned as 'soldatmorts' mentioned by the narrator at the outset, these figures and the constant production of evidence and counter-claims prove to be an obstacle to any effective settlement. The response from the daughter to institutional obstructions in this context is also consistent with her effort to call into question the

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<sup>258</sup> Alison Rice, 'Answering to "Muslim" Language, Country, and Religion in Zahia Rahamani's "*Musulman*" roman', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 32 (2009), 347–53 (p. 349).

<sup>259</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 91.

persistence of this past and its dividing lines. In engaging in a symbolic response in this pursuit of a just settlement for the father by acting on his behalf, Reeck identifies how Moze's daughter 'may be seen to occupy an Antigone-like role'.<sup>260</sup> If the dilemma faced indeed relates to universal themes of injustice and filiation, it is presented as requiring definitive action: 'Le corps de Moze doit être déclaré, c'est au grand jour qu'on creusera. Nous ne bénéficierons d'aucune discrétion.'<sup>261</sup> Her determination is not only to bury the father, but to do so clearly and publicly.

Following this engagement in advocacy for her late father and the adoption of a strong critical position on the actions of the French state, the third section of the text presents the appearance of Moze's daughter before a French commission on reparations. Further to the imagined dialogue in Algeria represented in the previous section, it stages a substantial challenge to what she identifies as the French state's continual lack of recognition of the effects of its policies relating to Harki families. The central theme of working to establish a case to force through recognition of the Harkis is developed further here and, as Crystel Pinçonnat emphasizes, is framed significantly by the conditions of dialogue and the staging of figures around the daughter: 'Bien qu'il s'agisse d'un récit, *Moze* adopte un modèle théâtral.'<sup>262</sup> The daughter's appearance before the commission presents an immediate tension between the clarity she seeks and the position of the French state. Faced with frustration at a position of official closure and limited ground for exchanges, she argues for the necessity of assessing fully the past and its consequences: 'Nous la ferons dire!'<sup>263</sup> The force of her voice is central throughout this exchange and again provides the basis, as in the exchange with the investigator in the first section, for a challenge to their limited recognition from the French state. Following

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<sup>260</sup> Reeck, 'Autofictional Testimony', p. 133.

<sup>261</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 103.

<sup>262</sup> Crystel Pinçonnat, 'Le Complexe d'Antigone: Relectures féministes et postcoloniales du scénario œdipien', *Revue de littérature comparée*, 344 (2012), 495–509 (p. 504).

<sup>263</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 112.

the dispute in Algeria, her approach is shown to be equally combative in both nations. In this particular scene, the opportunity to present testimony takes the form of a monologue from the daughter and a confrontation with those on the commission to whom she assigns responsibility. Consistent with Reeck's identification of the importance of testimony to the overall progression of Rahmani's text, the daughter's statement takes on further critical form as it 'morphs progressively into the trial of the members sitting on the commission'.<sup>264</sup> The case that the narrator presents in this scene also connects with Kerchouche's account of speaking on behalf of her parents when confronting the former commander of the camp at Mouans-Sartoux. She emphasizes the lasting effects on the family of his abusive rule in arguing how: 'vous les avez réduits à une misère noire.'<sup>265</sup> Both texts also feature the daughter in the role of both investigator and activist. Having found a suitable arena in which to carry out critical questioning in the interests of the parents, direct confrontation with figures of authority serves, for both, as a moment of catharsis. Where Kerchouche's objection was primarily towards an individual within a greater system, however, Rahmani does not possess such means of direct identification and instead places her sense of injustice into the broadest possible context.

As representatives of a younger generation who attempt to reinterpret the experiences of parents, Harki daughters act with a sense of urgency after breaking silences. The narrator of *Moze*, for example, aims to seize upon a context of emerging memories and their increased recognition across France in order to challenge previous silences, as she argues how: 'L'histoire qui nous concerne n'est pas close. Tout est vif. Il faut agir.'<sup>266</sup> Acting to achieve full recognition from the French state and expose its responsibilities is a key motivation for the daughter and is stated in stark contrast to the consistent attempts at

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<sup>264</sup> Reeck, 'The Law/Laws of Hospitality chez Zahia Rahmani', p. 83.

<sup>265</sup> Dalila Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 126.

<sup>266</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 126.

closing off the past that she identifies. She also prefers greater clarity and openness from all sides, rather than simply seeking compensation for past injustices. Throughout the text, the narrator places emphasis on the importance of further exposure and re-examination of details of the conflict and its aftermath. This is a process for which Ireland also highlights the significance of dialogue.<sup>267</sup> In particular, repetition of the verb ‘parler’ during her testimony highlights the importance she attaches to this exchange. In exposing the fate of Harkis in France since 1962, the daughter finds that ‘il faut parler de ce qui a eu lieu! Parler avec ceux-là qui l’ont vécu’.<sup>268</sup> In the following section, the daughter gains further understanding from the account of her mother, particularly regarding the family’s experiences arising from their separation from the father during his imprisonment. She argues for the particular value of the mother’s account as an alternative form of testimony, as ‘la mémoire de ma mère n’appartient à aucune légende, elle est réelle et bien vivante’.<sup>269</sup> Further personal details explaining Rahmani’s perspective are included in explanations from the mother: “Tu es née le lendemain de notre condamnation.”<sup>270</sup> This equally relates to the examination of experiences affecting both the self and immediate family central to the development of the genre termed ‘collecto-biography’ by Sutherland. While an overall focus for Rahmani, as for Kerchouche, is necessarily on documenting the experiences of the father, they also ‘ultimately aim to pay tribute to the mothers who held the families together in the face of exile and loss...’<sup>271</sup> and were responsible for the transmission of memory. The mother’s perspective on this collective ‘condemnation’ resulting from the position imposed on the father is indicative of the status that the daughter aims to overturn.

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<sup>267</sup> Susan Ireland, ‘The Algerian War Revisited’, in *Memory, Empire and Postcolonialism: Legacies of French Colonialism*, ed. by Alec G. Hargreaves (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 203–15 (p. 210).

<sup>268</sup> Rahmani, *Mozge*, p. 136.

<sup>269</sup> Rahmani, *Mozge*, p. 159.

<sup>270</sup> Rahmani, *Mozge*, p. 150.

<sup>271</sup> Sutherland, ‘Harki Autobiographies or Collecto-Biographies?’, p. 198.

On the strength of the perspective gained from the mother and the importance attached by the narrator to the process of working around the father's silence, the final section of the text sees her obtain a direct connection, as 'la voix de Moze glisse en sa fille'.<sup>272</sup> As a culmination of the exploration of memory, it presents a dialogue with the dead father. In line with the forms of repetition employed by Rahmani, particular emphasis is placed in this final part on the verb 'se souvenir'. This stands, in effect, as an end product of her investigative process and a progression from the importance attached to 'parler' earlier in the text. Indeed, having substantiated a position through exchanges with her mother, the daughter returns to the deceased father at this climax with a concern for how to commemorate most effectively. This conversation highlights a tension, equally identified by Kerchouche, regarding the father's silence and the corresponding difficulty of recovering and clarifying Harki memories. In the case of Kerchouche, after charting an itinerary of sites in France relevant to family memory, this tension is sharpened by the journey to Algeria. This contributed to her efforts to deconstruct prevailing myths and divisions and, ultimately, break her father's silence. For Rahmani, it is the observance of mourning of the father and the critical questioning raised around this that contribute to breaking silence on their long-term suffering, even as the father explains his reluctance to talk: 'J'ai honte de cette honte que je ne vous ai jamais dite'.<sup>273</sup> For the daughter in the position of investigator, dialogue is the only way to carry out the process of questioning memory, in spite of the deceased father's insistence that 'la parole ne peut me ramener'.<sup>274</sup> Although no full settlement is achieved on the terms demanded, nonetheless, as Reeck finds, 'the daughter-narrator has expiated her shame, and Rahmani has given

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<sup>272</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 173.

<sup>273</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 179.

<sup>274</sup> Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 179.

her father a proper burial'.<sup>275</sup> This conclusion is also an important factor in the clear and more positive identity that she seeks as the daughter of a Harki.

Over the course of the sections in *Moze* representing the progression of the daughter's perspective and her interaction with other voices providing testimony, a series of cases highlighting the fate of the Harkis as a group are tabled. In line with Rahmani's process of working simultaneously on the level of family experiences and the broader social position of the Harkis in France, progression for the narrator is based on the ability to fully contextualize her father's position and, by extension, its effect on herself. The necessity that the daughter identifies of fully processing Moze's death means, as Pinçonat also identifies, that its haunting quality will continue until full engagement with legacies by France, as demanded by the daughter, is achieved: 'Les morts tourmentés hantent sans relâche les vivants.'<sup>276</sup> Further to the qualities of literature for guiding interpretation of contested or obscured pasts proposed by Barclay, therefore, the questioning of legacies carried out by Rahmani and Kerchouche with a sense of urgency and an ultimately reconciliatory aim, arises from the frustrations of their inheritance. For Moser, Rahmani's literary style is particularly productive in the challenge it presents, as its conclusions on the untenable status of the father 'posits that history cannot be rewritten from a more inclusive perspective unless binary logic is first deconstructed'.<sup>277</sup> The dialogue with the dead father that closes the daughter's questioning finalizes the perspective intended at the outset of breaking definitively with their marginal, silenced status, as well as challenging the Harkis' categorization on the grounds of allegiance and working to place them in a multilateral frame for assessing ongoing legacies of the conflict and colonialism in France.

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<sup>275</sup> Reeck, 'Autofictional Testimony', p. 140.

<sup>276</sup> Pinçonat, 'Le Complexe d'Antigone', p. 506.

<sup>277</sup> Moser, 'Two Literary Texts that Concretize the Goals of the "Harki Spring"', p. 184.

Each of the works by daughter-narrators in this corpus presents a starting point and stimulus to explore their past in response to unresolved tensions. For Rahmani, this comes with the death of the father, while for Kerchouche a persistent sense of stigma motivates her investigations and efforts to break collective silence. As Zineb Ali-Ben Ali finds, ‘dans chacune des histoires, un évènement avec son excès d’injustice et de déni fait sortir le père ou sa fille de la réserve qu’ils s’étaient imposée’.<sup>278</sup> In *Fille de Harki*, Fatima Besnaci-Lancou dates her motivation to explore personal and family memory to her reaction to the comments made in France in June 2000 by Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, comparing the Harkis to French collaborators with the Nazis and thus an indefensible group. As well as marking a precise date for when awareness of a past that remains unresolved was brought into sharp focus, the significance of Bouteflika’s remark is recounted for its direct effect on her: ‘Près de quarante ans après, alors que je l’avais presque oublié, sa phrase, comme une gifle, est venu réveiller mon passé et toutes ses horreurs.’<sup>279</sup> This episode, however, motivates the author to challenge such persistent dualities and de-fuse tensions by exploring fully the Harki experience of marginality in both France and Algeria. The process for Besnaci-Lancou of writing an account that draws on the experiences of her family and their problematic settlement in France provides a means for putting into question the status derived from the father. Similar to Kerchouche and Rahmani in their reflections on the difficulties of self-identification, therefore, she identifies her text, which largely takes the form of a personal testimony, as the necessary form for expressing previously repressed emotions and enacting a recovery of memory. She describes how, until finding her motivation to recover and assess memories, she had felt confined by the weight of an unarticulated past: ‘Comme beaucoup, j’ai tenu ma douleur enfermée. À présent, il faut que je raconte. Il faut stopper

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<sup>278</sup> Zineb Ali-Ben Ali, ‘Porteurs de mémoire. Quand la littérature est attente d’Histoire’, in *Les Harkis: Histoire, mémoire et transmission*, ed. by Fatima Besnaci-Lancou, Benoît Falaize and Gilles Manceron (Paris: Éditions de l’Atelier, 2010), pp. 115–23 (p. 122).

<sup>279</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 13.



la chaîne du malheur.<sup>280</sup> Writing in order to change this self-identification and sense of a burden is the overall aim of the narrators of all three of the texts. Textual analysis of the work by Besnaci-Lancou in the following section will focus on this process of individual unburdening and the methods that the narrator employs to connect her personal and family experiences to a broader history and to question the place of the Harkis as a group present across France and Algeria.

### **Fatima Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki***

In *Fille de Harki*, Besnaci-Lancou presents a memoir of her own experiences, while also seeking to recover the memory of others and assess the position of Harkis and their descendants in contemporary France. As a clear starting point for issues of inheritance central to the preoccupation with memory also shared with Kerchouche and Rahmani, the title addresses directly her sense of an imposed identity. As with the approaches identified across this second-generation corpus, Besnaci-Lancou seeks to broaden her perspective and challenge persistent divisions of group identity and belonging: ‘Être harki, ce n’est pas héréditaire. Hélas, le malheur se transmet.’<sup>281</sup> Enjelvin also emphasizes the importance of the process of self-questioning for Besnaci-Lancou, as, through her style of testimony, *Fille de Harki* enables its author to openly forgive her father and to divest herself of the guilt that she, as a Harki’s daughter, was harbouring against herself.<sup>282</sup> The critical perspective gained therefore motivates a further challenge to post-independence fractures between France and Algeria of the sort reified by Bouteflika’s comments in 2000 and to develop, in turn, a more nuanced interpretation of the conditions surrounding the fate of the Harkis. In the opening section of her account, after consideration of the initial stimulus to write and the persistently painful Harki

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<sup>280</sup> Fatima Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki* (Paris: Éditions de l’Atelier, 2005), p. 20.

<sup>281</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 17.

<sup>282</sup> Géraldine Enjelvin, ‘A Harki Daughter’s Offline and Online “parole cicatrisante”’, *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 45:2 (2008), 136–49 (p. 147).

experiences and divisions in France, Besnaci-Lancou develops this personal reconstruction by recounting the rupture of her family's flight from Algeria after independence in 1962 and the lasting difficulties of their settlement in France. Whereas Kerchouche, for example, was born in France a decade after her family's move and works with a sense of distance, Besnaci-Lancou has a significant personal memory of the circumstances of their departure and recounts events experienced as an eight-year-old. Her perspective as witness to events is therefore significant to efforts of recovering memory, which remain difficult to express: 'Ma vie s'est jouée en une année, l'année 1962. Cette année de sang, je l'ai tenue jusqu'à aujourd'hui bien emprisonnée, au fond de ma mémoire, comme un secret honteux, douloureux, indicible.'<sup>283</sup> This uprooting forms the basis of her perspective.

In this account of escape and urgent resettlement, Besnaci-Lancou focuses, in particular, on the sudden transformation in treatment of Harkis and their families immediately after decolonization. The family's home village in rural Algeria is described as being divided, and a theme of stark dualities between camps is identified as a consequence of the father's alignment with the French: 'Du jour au lendemain, nous étions devenus des marginaux.'<sup>284</sup> In response to the fear of further retribution, her father escaped to a French military base to claim refuge. Despite their attempts to adapt and stay in Algeria in the aftermath of independence, the family's transformation and ultimately untenable position led to their abandonment, in secret, of their village, to join the father in the French base in October 1962.<sup>285</sup> As both recent research and testimony concerning this period in the works by Kerchouche and Rahmani have sought to demonstrate, the process of how men became Harkis was often the result of force or opportunism for short-term gain, rather than any prevailing sense of loyalty to France. The significance of

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<sup>283</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 20.

<sup>284</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 27.

<sup>285</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 39.

their status led, however, to these men and their families being caught between ruptures in both nations in 1962. Consistent with this reading of circumstances forced upon them, Enjelvin also finds that, by drawing on collective experiences, 'Besnaci-Lancou ne dresse aucunement le portrait de Harkis symboles de loyauté et de patriotisme'.<sup>286</sup> Instead, she seeks to place them in the context of a broader crisis.

Besnaci-Lancou's account centres on her family's passage from Algeria to France and the transformation that they underwent following the end of the conflict. After abandoning their village, the family's uncertain status and transient position was framed by their dependency on French authorities and consistent treatment as a burden to the state. The uprooting and entry into the French administrative system that was to prove central to Harki experiences in France therefore occurs with this initial loss of home, before the crossing of the Mediterranean. In Besnaci-Lancou's account, there is particular despair at being caught between both France and Algeria and the loss of perspective resulting from this absence of reference points: 'Nous étions coupés du monde extérieur. Nous n'étions nulle part.'<sup>287</sup> It is in the reconstruction of the intermediate space of the holding camp, however, that Besnaci-Lancou most significantly gives voice to her mother, as it is through her that the conditions leading to their uprooting are explained. This account of the daily advance of the war up to 1962 also further relativizes later claims to common Harki loyalty to France and highlights the significant effects of their incarceration. As Besnaci-Lancou's mother recounts in her reflection on their limited connection to the events of the conflict: 'Pour nous, participer à cette guerre en nourrissant les maquisards nous suffisait.'<sup>288</sup> Indeed, a consistent theme of distance from control over their circumstances is significant to the mother's perspective: 'C'était à Paris et à Alger que les

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<sup>286</sup> Géraldine Enjelvin, 'Fille de Harki de Fatima Besnaci-Lancou: "Harkéologie" et Espace de Décolonisation?', *French Studies Bulletin*, 26 (96) (2005), 11–16 (p. 13).

<sup>287</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, pp. 53–4.

<sup>288</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 48.

politiques décidaient pour nous. L'histoire s'écrivait loin de nous.<sup>289</sup> While they consistently sought stability and safety, they remained shaped by an uncertain course of events.

The experiences attached to factors of displacement and forced movement from Algeria to France make their framing around factors of place significant. While still in the French holding camp in Algeria Besnaci-Lancou gives voice, through her recollections as an eight-year-old observer, to her mother. Further to this, the account of daily life in the system of camps is also presented through a form that provides the perspectives of other women. This style contributes to the position developed throughout the text by Besnaci-Lancou on the importance of a more nuanced approach to the experiences of Harkis and their families. Enrolment in French forces was not widely subject to principles of loyalty but, instead, pragmatism as it is explained how: 'ils avaient choisi la maladie qui laissait le moins de cicatrices sur la conscience.'<sup>290</sup> Against the dualism and divisions that have persisted, the accounts of factors surrounding the employment of Harkis therefore serve to relativize their subsequent position. After the desperation and uncertainty of the crossing from Algeria, the family was sent, upon its arrival in France, to the camp at Rivesaltes (near Perpignan), an experience similar to that described by Kerchouche. This policy of resettlement forms a major part of the narrator's formative experiences and the environment of the camp frames the family's disorientation following the journey from Algeria: 'Nous n'avions plus aucun repère. Nous roulâmes pendant longtemps vers ce lieu qui allait être notre première grande étape en France.'<sup>291</sup> The conditions of life in the camps and a long-term marginal status are found by the narrator to have been internalized by their inhabitants and exacerbated by a lack of agency. Her observation of a condition derived from confinement in the camp remains striking for its impact on her

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<sup>289</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 57.

<sup>290</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 70.

<sup>291</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 65.

understanding of subsequent discriminations in society, and is traced back to the shock of arrival and conditions at Rivesaltes. Their transfer to the camp imposed a sense of powerlessness in addition to guilt and stigmatization following their loss of home in Algeria: ‘Cette culpabilité fut favorisée et entretenue jusqu’à aujourd’hui par le rejet dont nous avons été l’objet des deux côtés de la méditerranée.’<sup>292</sup> Further development in charting the experiences of the narrator and her family is marked by a gradual progression in their relation to spatial environment.

On the basis of the administrative system that determined employment and further family resettlement, Besnaci-Lancou’s family were able to move out of Rivesaltes to a village in the Auvergne.<sup>293</sup> Certain connections with pre-independence life were therefore maintained, but remained marked by consistent marginality and confinement to rural locations. This break with the system of camps is indeed presented with initial optimism regarding resettlement: ‘Nous allons enfin vivre au contact de Français de France, que nous avons tellement essayé d’imaginer!’<sup>294</sup> The precariousness of the family’s position is, however, exposed when, due to the father’s ill health and consequent loss of employment, they were forced to return to the administrative system. This is experienced as a significant setback, following the advances made in independence for the family in settling: ‘Revenir dans un camp militaire, sans ressources, c’était un retour en arrière, une régression de notre insertion en France.’<sup>295</sup> At each stage of her account, Besnaci-Lancou aims to interrogate the conditions surrounding her formative experiences in rural and peripheral locations. She recognises, above all, the lasting effects of the separation from French society that was imposed at an early age and continued to shape her perspective: ‘Arrivée à Rivesaltes à huit ans, je n’ai vraiment quitté l’univers des camps qu’à vingt-cinq

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<sup>292</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 75.

<sup>293</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 81.

<sup>294</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 85.

<sup>295</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 99.

ans.<sup>296</sup> In reflecting on her eventual passage out of the camps and administrative limits to the position from which she narrates, Besnaci-Lancou emphasizes awareness of her own status as the most educationally successful child of the family, a perspective shared with Kerchouche. Her trajectory of education and substantial integration in France places her in a position to narrate and work through the experiences of her parents. This sense of responsibility to reinterpret on behalf of others is consistent across texts by Harki daughters, as they deal with the delay that limited the establishment of a clear critical position and the shift in perspectives that occurred from the distance of a generation. Each narrator is also aware of the range of implications for Harki positions that combined spatial and social marginality. As Besnaci-Lancou argues in her reflection on the isolation to which Harki families were subject in these settlements, ‘nous représentons la mauvaise conscience et l’échec de la France. Ceci explique notre difficulté d’intégration’.<sup>297</sup> This makes geographical reference crucial to the renewed critical interpretations that she carries out.

In her conclusion, Besnaci-Lancou identifies the extent of the impact of her formative years confined to spatial and social peripheries in France, as well as the means required for eventually finding her voice: ‘Il m’a fallu des années pour prendre conscience des effets destructeurs de notre mise à l’écart et de toutes ses conséquences.’<sup>298</sup> Where she initially framed her account around her reaction to Bouteflika’s comments in 2000 – and the unresolved tensions that they exposed – she progresses to gain a broader critical perspective on her own position and connections to the fallout from the conflict. For Besnaci-Lancou, above all, a progressive approach to settle tensions is proposed in her conclusion to the perspective gained from the process of writing: ‘Aujourd’hui je ne

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<sup>296</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 103.

<sup>297</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 104.

<sup>298</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 116.

condamne pas, j'essaie de comprendre et de vivre avec mon histoire.'<sup>299</sup> The motivation of Harki daughters in France to question aspects of inheritance and a persistently marginal status is identified by Crapanzano as an effort to treat forms of suffering: 'Unlike their fathers, the children can take no responsibility for what they inherited from the cradle. They are doubly wounded.'<sup>300</sup> While wounds have remained without effective treatment due to the French state's shortcomings in recognition of its treatment of Harki families, representatives of a younger generation have also, as this chapter demonstrates through textual analysis, developed independent forms for processing memory and gained clearer understanding of their inherited condition. Holding to account individuals and institutions they deem responsible for the lasting effects of policies is central to the common process for Harki daughters of questioning their inheritance and emphasizing an active, rather than a passive position. The questioning of an effective framework for collective memory aims to surpass the difficulties framed, for example, by Crapanzano's focus on the motif of the wound. As Eldridge notes, 'unlike the homeland they left behind, the harkis themselves were never decolonized'.<sup>301</sup> An interrogation of the factors behind this is carried out, in particular when, as in the cases of both Kerchouche and Rahmani, daughters act as proxies for their parents in order to emphasize the haunting consequences of injustice and the need for symbolic redress.

By the end of her account, having achieved a degree of personal resolution and clarification, Besnaci-Lancou moves on to consider the grounds for further action to support mediation of collective memories that remain contested in French society. At the outset, following her initial motivations to write, she had expressed scepticism regarding forms of memory activism that seek reparations and specific compartmentalization of the Harkis as a social group in France. Although she is clear in her sense of belonging

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<sup>299</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 118.

<sup>300</sup> Crapanzano, *The Harkis: The Wound that Never Heals*, p. 187.

<sup>301</sup> Eldridge, "We've never had a voice", p. 103.

and the origin of her status in the country, she is concerned by the risk of limitations: ‘Jusqu’ici, je ne m’étais intéressée qu’épisodiquement à ma communauté d’infortune. Je ne voulais pas rester prisonnière d’une identité cloisonnée.’<sup>302</sup> Over the course of her text, however, having retraced the experience of her family and a personal trajectory of integration, she expresses renewed awareness of the continually problematic status of Harkis and their descendants in France in a broader context of incomplete engagement with the legacies of decolonization. In response to the post-independence position of Harkis, she particularly finds that ‘aucun acte symbolique fort n’a été encore accompli, il reste encore beaucoup à faire pour une reconnaissance de la communauté dans le domaine symbolique’.<sup>303</sup> For example, Besnaci-Lancou approves of legal actions brought against the French state in pursuit of reparations and official recognition. Such actions, she argues, ‘sont de nature à aider la communauté à en finir avec l’état de colonisé’.<sup>304</sup> It is nonetheless important to her that Harki memories and experiences are consistently situated in a broad historical context, and that an exclusive focus on Harkis at the expense of other groups in France is avoided. Further to this, Enjelvin and Korac-Kakabadse identify the particular importance of the practical uses of this position sought by the author: ‘In the closing pages of her book, Besnaci-Lancou hints at the need for a “contrapuntal reading” and rewriting of the Algerian war.’<sup>305</sup> Attention to the connections between Harkis and other constituencies of social memory and Algerian legacies in France is indeed a significant advance and would involve, in practice, efforts to develop a form of collective memory balanced between a plurality of groups. This is consistent with the collective approach she advocates and, as a conclusion to her engagement with memory, contrasts with the forms of confrontation as catharsis in speaking for the parents experienced by Rahmani and Kerchouche. For both of these

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<sup>302</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 17.

<sup>303</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 72.

<sup>304</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 118.

<sup>305</sup> Enjelvin & Korac-Kakabadse, ‘France and the memories of “Others”’, p. 164.



authors, as Olsson finds, ‘the literary space functions as a type of research laboratory which allows them to test hypotheses based on accepted historical facts and conjectures’.<sup>306</sup> Where they develop new approaches towards memory and shed new light on past experiences, all three narrators seek, through the forms that they employ, to place Harki memory in new frameworks and support its intergenerational transmission in ways more effective than elsewhere found in the public sphere in France.

Besnaci-Lancou’s self-appointed role as a public representative of a younger generation involves her placing emphasis on the integration into France achieved by the descendants of Harkis and their search for inclusion into a broadened national narrative. As demonstrated in the textual analysis above, her approach in *Fille de Harki* involves bringing persistently obscured perspectives and under-represented individuals into a clearer light. Following her search for greater historical clarity and a personal settlement with a contentious past, the writing of *Fille de Harki* also served to motivate Besnaci-Lancou to pursue further work of memory activism, and she continues to play a major role in promoting a collective memory of the Algerian War and support for greater reconciliation.<sup>307</sup> She has indeed emphasized in her subsequent work how: ‘L’enjeu de la transmission est majeur.’<sup>308</sup> All three of the texts that this chapter analyses start from a similar concern for the clear transmission of memory. As they pursue varying forms of treatment of afterlives of the Algerian War, they also achieve specific personal resolutions. For Jo McCormack, the processes of reinterpretation that these Harki daughters carry out demonstrate the value of literature as a medium for challenging persistently negative or tense connections to the past: ‘Writing can be seen as healing

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<sup>306</sup> Olsson, ‘In the Name of the Father’, p. 158.

<sup>307</sup> In 2004 Besnaci-Lancou founded the group *Association Harkis et Droits de l’Homme*. She has also published prolifically since her 2003 testimony, working in collaboration with historians as, for example, in the 2010 volume: *Les Harkis: Histoire, mémoire et transmission*, ed. by Fatima Besnaci-Lancou, Benoît Falaize and Gilles Manceron (Paris: Éditions de l’Atelier, 2010).

<sup>308</sup> Fatima Besnaci-Lancou, Benoît Falaize and Gilles Manceron, ‘Introduction’, in *Les Harkis: Histoire, mémoire et transmission*, ed. by Fatima Besnaci-Lancou, Benoît Falaize and Gilles Manceron (Paris: Éditions de l’Atelier, 2010), pp. 11–14 (p. 13).

trauma (in a Freudian perspective), as an example of agency in collective memory (in a pluralist perspective), and as constructing memories that provide group cohesion in the present (in a Halbwachsian perspective).<sup>309</sup> In addition to their engagements with memory, the effectiveness of the efforts of these Harki daughters to negotiate afterlives of the Algerian War also lies in the distanced perspectives they possess and their ability to move between contexts in piecing together details relating to their family. For Kerchouche, Rahmani and Besnaci-Lancou, the purpose of their strategies of remembrance is thus to support the development of a distinct personal identity in the present, while affirming clear connections to a Harki collective memory. The aim of Harki daughters is also summarized by Ibrahim-Lamrous, who notes how, in writing with an intention to clarify the past and break long-term silences, ‘les descendants aspirent ainsi à réhabiliter leurs pères mais aussi à rompre la transmission de la culpabilité et de la honte’.<sup>310</sup> For each of these individuals, a turn to writing has thus enabled the establishment of independent, personal connections to Harki collective memory and new forms of self-identification in a context of persistent tensions in France surrounding the aftermath of colonialism. The final section of this chapter will assess further the value of these texts and the processes of mediating memory they represent in counterpoint to a memorial landscape in France.

### **Renewed Sites of Harki Memory**

While increased forms of recognition of the Harkis through physical memorials suggests new engagement and openness from the French state alongside the framework for collective memory explored in recent texts, such decisions can also result from specific political calculations. Moumen observes how much of the recognition in France

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<sup>309</sup> Jo McCormack, ‘Memory and Exile: Contemporary France and the Algerian War (1954-1962)’, in *Exile Cultures, Misplaced Identities*, ed. by Paul Allatson and Jo McCormack (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), pp. 117–38 (p. 137).

<sup>310</sup> Ibrahim-Lamrous, ‘*Mon père, ce harki*’ de Dalila Kerchouche’, p. 189.

accorded to Harkis and their descendants engaged in memory activism has been based on identification of their position as an electoral constituency.<sup>311</sup> As demonstrated in the survey of political initiatives for commemoration in contemporary France in Chapter 1 of this thesis, electoral cycles often motivate new pledges and appeals to specific constituencies.<sup>312</sup> During the Presidential election campaign in 2012, for example, Nicolas Sarkozy sought to make a formal declaration recognising the abandonment of the Harkis along specifically moral lines. The timing of his declaration, however, again highlighted the categorization to which constituencies of memory and groups shaped by afterlives of the Algerian War are subjected.<sup>313</sup> Further to this position as a group representing specific aspects of social memory and corresponding interests as an electoral constituency, the annual day of commemoration of the Harkis on 25 September has also become, in recent years, a focus for campaigning and marks a cycle of interaction between politics and memory activism. In 2012, on the occasion of his first Harki memorial day as President, François Hollande made a renewed claim for recognition of the French state's role and responsibility in the suffering of the Harki community in the years after 1962.<sup>314</sup> While this involved awareness of this treatment as a fault, it significantly ruled out further inscription of such official positions into law.

For commemorations in 2014, further recognition of the Harkis observed in a speech by Prime Minister Manuel Valls focused again on valorizing the contribution made to France in military service. In response to issues of social marginalisation that have persisted, plans addressing the twin themes of memorial recognition and material

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<sup>311</sup> Moumen, '1962-2014: The Historical Construction of Harki Literature', p. 10.

<sup>312</sup> See, in particular, pp. 40–42.

<sup>313</sup> Elise Vincent, 'M. Sarkozy reconnaît la "responsabilité" de la France dans "l'abandon" des harkis', *Le Monde*, 16 April 2012, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2012/article/2012/04/16/m-sarkozy-reconnait-la-responsabilite-de-la-france-dans-l-abandon-des-harkis\\_1685919\\_1471069.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2012/article/2012/04/16/m-sarkozy-reconnait-la-responsabilite-de-la-france-dans-l-abandon-des-harkis_1685919_1471069.html)> [accessed 24 November 2017].

<sup>314</sup> 'François Hollande reconnaît la "faute" de la France dans "l'abandon" des harkis', *Le Monde*, 25 September 2012, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2012/09/25/francois-hollande-reconnait-la-faute-de-la-france-dans-l-abandon-des-harkis\\_1765592\\_823448.html#0fqC8bsUZwaWcdlC.99](http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2012/09/25/francois-hollande-reconnait-la-faute-de-la-france-dans-l-abandon-des-harkis_1765592_823448.html#0fqC8bsUZwaWcdlC.99)> [accessed 24 November 2017].

reparation were proposed.<sup>315</sup> Compensation, in the form of entitlement to increased welfare benefits, is directed towards the children of the Harkis who experienced the camps, a constituency identified by Valls as ‘la génération charnière, celle qui n’a pas pu trouver la place à laquelle elle avait droit’.<sup>316</sup> Further advances in matters of social integration are therefore centred on this generation. His speech argued for an implementation of the proposed policies to be combined with greater engagement in dialogue, as, for Valls ‘l’apaisement, c’est avant tout la justice. Elle passe par la reconnaissance et la réparation’.<sup>317</sup> This series of proposals was, however, notably criticized by Besnaci-Lancou, in her role as campaigner for greater recognition of Harkis, as offering little practical advance. Her demand for effective historical recognition and engagement with the social factors that perpetuated a marginal status, rather than only compensation and treatment as an electoral constituency, is clear: ‘Nous ne voulons pas de mesures spécifiques.’<sup>318</sup> This recent and ongoing series of proposals for recognition of the Harkis and reparation by the French state, placing them in a specific context of loyalty in military service, and the responses from advocates of a broader approach to Harki memory such as Besnaci-Lancou, highlights an ongoing contrast between approaches to interpreting fully the implications of Harki displacement from Algeria and settlement in France. Alongside the forms of commemoration marked by the annual cycle around 25 September, the commissioning of a range of memorials and physical sites has further indicated the presence and visibility of Harki memory in France.

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<sup>315</sup> Ministère de la défense, ‘Lancement d’un plan d’actions en faveur des harkis’, 25 September 2014, <<http://www.defense.gouv.fr/actualites/articles/lancement-d-un-plan-d-actions-en-faveur-des-harkis>> [accessed 24 November 2017].

<sup>316</sup> Manuel Valls, ‘Discours: Journée nationale d’hommage aux harkis au Mémorial du Quai Branly’, 24 September 2014, <<http://www.gouvernement.fr/partage/2101-discours-journee-nationale-d-hommage-aux-harkis-au-memorial-du-quai-branly>> [accessed 24 November 2017].

<sup>317</sup> Valls, ‘Discours: Journée nationale d’hommage aux harkis au Mémorial du Quai Branly’

<sup>318</sup> Gaël Vaillant, “Sur les Harkis, Hollande fait la même chose que Sarkozy”, *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 25 September 2014 <<http://www.lejdd.fr/Societe/Sur-les-harkis-Hollande-fait-la-meme-chose-que-Sarkozy-689470#>> [accessed 24 November 2017].

Overall, the contrasts between the interpretations of Harki memory that are advanced in texts by authors drawn from a generation raised in France and the forms of commemoration developed at an official, state level demonstrate the range of tensions that continue to surround engagement with details of the colonial past. Persistent obstructions to recognition of the status of Harkis in relation to decolonization in France are, however, challenged significantly by the approaches that these works pursue. In his study of generational dynamics and processes of coming to voice, Moumen also observes how, by emphasizing claims to visibility as a group and seeking inscription into public space, newer approaches to Harki memory have sought the ‘re-appropriation’ of the original spaces of settlement in France in order to advance forms of memorialization.<sup>319</sup> As discussed throughout the textual analysis in this chapter, engagement with connections between memory and physical locations is crucial to the original forms presented by these narrators, for whom peripheral spaces and institutional environments shaped formative experiences in France. For Besnaci-Lancou, for example, the results of her testimony and interrogation of personal memory have motivated further, broadened engagements. For Kerchouche, equally, the topographical approach adopted for personal comprehension provides grounds for more effective approaches to the charting of memory. The ways in which these texts reflect on means of developing a more effective framework for the transmission of Harki memory also relate usefully to the proposal made by Lydie Moudileno in her call for a form of ‘provincialization’ of contemporary France and its postcolonial connections. For Moudileno, a specifically spatial approach to dynamics of memory and identity rooted in provincial or peripheral locations, often corresponding to marginalized groups such as the Harkis, can serve to de-centre approaches and further ‘rework the cartography of postcolonial France’.<sup>320</sup> The works by Kerchouche, Rahmani and Besnaci-Lancou do exactly this. Where attention to physical

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<sup>319</sup> Moumen, ‘1962-2014: The Historical Construction of Harki Literature’, pp. 9–10.

<sup>320</sup> Lydie Moudileno, ‘The Postcolonial Provinces’, *Francosphères*, 1:1 (2012), 53–68 (p. 60).

locations is important to each of the texts under analysis here, it serves as a crucial basis for the efforts of narrators to examine critically the position of Harkis and their descendants in contemporary France. The particular 're-working' that they carry out, moreover, involves focusing on locations and the conditions and experiences that are associated with them in order to better serve the transmission of memory.

If the initial tension motivating the processes of reinterpreting memories concerns clear expression in order to resolve tensions of inherited and persistent marginality, they progress to consider the substantiation of a position in France and the inscription of the Harkis into a broadened frame for engagement with the past. In addition to their combination of personal testimony and direct questioning of broader social inequalities in France concerning Harki families, the ways in which these narrators challenge previous representations of Harkis in the public domain in France and propose new frameworks is also identified by Fabbiano, who finds that 'if the literary space reflects the memorial space, it also contributes to its transformation'.<sup>321</sup> As highlighted by the reference to physical locations made by Kerchouche and Besnaci-Lancou, as well as by Rahmani's assessment of political and administrative policies, attention to the dispersal of Harki families to rural and peripheral locations is significant in framing their formative experiences and subsequent perspectives. They find the grounds for a framework of Harki collective memory to be rooted in physical spaces and the environments that resulted from the policies in France to which they were subject. In contrast to the model of 'lieux de mémoire' and fixed, stable references conceptualized by Nora, Harki memory traces require recovery due the way in which families were scattered across France by an administrative system. For Nora, the establishment of archival space to process collective reference points is particularly important, as 'les lieux de mémoire, ce sont d'abord des

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<sup>321</sup> Fabbiano, 'Writing as Performance', p. 33.

restes’.<sup>322</sup> In the case of Harki memory in France, however, it is also a matter of investigating the conditions of their dispersal. The critical significance of physical space to the transmission of memory is demonstrated most clearly in the topographical approach adopted by Kerchouche in *Mon père, ce Harki*. This involves, in effect, a two-step approach, as geographical space is identified by the author as being charged with memory connections in order to subsequently apply the specific approach of her ‘quête harkéologique’. As with the motivation demonstrated by Rahmani and Besnaci-Lancou to speak and act on behalf of the parents, this attention to place and awareness of the significance of spatial organisation in France to formative experiences serves as a major aspect in a process of developing a framework of new reference points for Harki collective memory.

The lasting effects of the administrative system of the camps, and the marginalization they imposed are central to the critical responses that these Harki daughters develop. Following their spell at Rivesaltes and their brief period of independence, Besnaci-Lancou and her family moved to the camp at Bourg-Lastic, in the Auvergne, and then to Mouans-Sartoux, also the site whose former commander was confronted by Kerchouche. Resettlement determined by the father’s employment is crucial to the experiences of both Besnaci-Lancou and Rahmani. For Kerchouche, furthermore, the range of six different camps and forestry settlements on her itinerary around France highlights the contrasts within this system and the factors influencing the family’s distribution across sites. Regarding the centrality of her father’s employment, for example, she finds that ‘cette administration sélectionne les harkis les plus valides tandis que les moins vaillants sont d’ores et déjà refoulés vers Bias’.<sup>323</sup> Across these works by Harki daughters, critical perspectives on this specifically spatial condition are essential in

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<sup>322</sup> Nora, ‘Entre Mémoire et Histoire’, p. xxiv.

<sup>323</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, pp. 71–2.

order to confront the implications and lasting effects of their marginality. As Eldridge notes, ‘these institutional environments have become emblematic of the Harki experience in France and were home to many second-generation activists during their formative years’.<sup>324</sup> These environments also serve, however, to mobilize renewed interpretations. In *Fille de Harki*, Besnaci-Lancou recounts her visit to the site of the camp at Bourg-Lastic years later as an adult and adopts a similar approach to Kerchouche towards memory embedded in space. She considers the further critical response to be developed through reconstruction and reference to sites: ‘Si les baraques pouvaient parler.’<sup>325</sup> Further to the movement and resettlement dependent on policies of employment of the father described in particular by Kerchouche, the dependency on authorities provides a geographical reference for the marginality with which each of the daughters seeks to break.

In this corpus of texts, engagements with the locations of former camps and sites of initial settlement are central to efforts to clarify and re-contextualize Harki positions within France. The critical value accorded, in particular, to Rivesaltes in a process aiming to relate Harki memory to factors of place is of further significance when placed in relation to consistent debates over memorialization. In *Mon père, ce Harki*, the visit by Kerchouche to the site of the former camp, at the start of her journey charting family experiences in order to clarify her own position, exposes the intensity of connections to memory to be found in specific locations. She describes how: ‘En marchant dans cette ville fantôme, j’ai l’impression d’avoir perdu une grande partie de l’amour que j’éprouvais pour ce pays.’<sup>326</sup> At a national level in France, as suggested by the trend for investment in military memorials that include reference to loyal service (discussed in Chapter 1), full inscription of Harki memory relating to broader experiences as a civilian population

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<sup>324</sup> Eldridge, “‘We’ve never had a voice’”, p. 93.

<sup>325</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 100.

<sup>326</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, p. 72.



remains incomplete. In this context, however, an alternative reference point is provided by the *Mémorial du camp de Rivesaltes*. This memorial and museological institution was commissioned and primarily funded by regional authorities and officially inaugurated in October 2015.<sup>327</sup> Incorporating Harki memory, it addresses the camp's use over several decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to house successive waves of refugee population and marginal groups to France.<sup>328</sup> In the texts under analysis here, the memories that narrators recover are inseparable from the locations in which they are framed. The re-appropriation and transformation of locations of former confinement and marginalization that narrators seek therefore concerns their use as effective reference points for the transmission of memory in the present. In her study treating persistent colonial legacies as 'debris', Ann Laura Stoler proposes to take as objects of study sites in which such traces and their lasting effects are found, and to assess their relation to transmission of the past. This approach has the aim 'to identify new ways to discern and define what constitutes the tangibilities of colonial pasts and imperial presence'.<sup>329</sup> The use of the image of ruin as a spatial and visible marker of colonial traces is particularly significant in the case of the Harkis, where locations retain connections to the past.

The particular significance and value of Rivesaltes as a *lieu de mémoire* is further evident when, as is the intention of the current memorial project, Harki experiences are both contextualized by reference to location and placed in comparison with the camp's previous populations.<sup>330</sup> As Jeanette E. Miller finds, the specific organization of the site

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<sup>327</sup> Conseil Général Pyrénées-Orientales, Le mémorial de Rivesaltes, <<http://www.cg66.fr/52-le-memorial-de-rivesaltes.htm>> [accessed 24 November 2017].

<sup>328</sup> 'Le mémorial du camp de Rivesaltes sera dédié au souvenir des "oubliés"', *La Dépêche du Midi*, 15/12/13 <<https://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2013/12/15/1775753-memorial-camp-rivesaltes-sera-dedie-souvenir-oublies.html>> [accessed 24 November 2017].

<sup>329</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, "'The Rot Remains': From Ruins to Ruination", in *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*, ed. by Ann Laura Stoler (Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press, 2013), pp. 1–35 (p. 5).

<sup>330</sup> This site-specific approach to research on Rivesaltes and a contrapuntal reading of its successive uses as an internment camp for, among other groups, Spanish Republican refugees in the 1930s and French Jews during the Second World War, has been developed most recently by the historians Nicolas Lebourg and Abderahmen Moumen: see Nicolas Lebourg and Abderahmen Moumen, *Rivesaltes, le camp de la France de 1939 à nos jours* (Perpignan: Éditions Trabucaire, 2015).

and the Harki populations in line with carceral functions reinforced their status: ‘Originally built to lodge military, refugee, and prisoner populations, the harkis’ living space in Rivesaltes operated like the camp’s earlier iterations.’<sup>331</sup> The way in which Harkis are connected to other groups and represented beyond narrow and specific reference to the crisis surrounding Algerian decolonization in 1962 also supports broader assessments of their status and persistent marginalization. For Scott Soo, a consideration of the palimpsestic qualities of the site of the camp, in relation to its development as a memorial, motivates broader connections between previously marginalized histories in France and calls into question ‘the framework within which memory is at work, together with its function within the overall memorial fabric from which contemporary French society draws its repertoire of symbolic meanings’.<sup>332</sup> As analysis in this chapter has also demonstrated, literary texts are particularly effective at recovering memories and presenting new perspectives on afterlives of Algeria in France framed by spatial reference. In this context, Stoler’s approach towards the notion of forms of debris and ruination is particularly useful in questioning senses of a clear distinction between colonial past and de-colonized present. The critical focus required ‘is not on inert remains, but on their vital refiguration’.<sup>333</sup> In this way, assessments of physical ruins and broader factors of ruination must therefore interconnect, as ongoing dynamics of memory and post-colonial social relations in contemporary France can be read productively from the reference points of sites.

In the visits to the sites of camps that form the basis of her investigation in *Mon père, ce Harki*, Kerchouche’s interpretation and writing of place enables her process of reimagining the family’s experiences. At the camp at Bias, for example, she assesses

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<sup>331</sup> Jeannette E. Miller, ‘A Camp for Foreigners and “Aliens”: The Harkis’ exile at the Rivesaltes Camp (1962–1964), *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 31:3 (2013), 21–44 (p. 28).

<sup>332</sup> Scott Soo, ‘Between borders: The remembrance practices of Spanish Exiles in the South-West of France’, in *At the Border: Margins and Peripheries in Modern France*, ed. by Henrice Altink and Sharif Gemie (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), pp. 96–116 (p. 98).

<sup>333</sup> Stoler, “‘The Rot Remains’: From Ruins to Ruination”, p. 10.

conditions in light of the accounts and testimonies gathered: 'Je me demandais quelle faute ils avaient commise pour être punis ainsi'.<sup>334</sup> Howell also outlines how Kerchouche's approach establishes a topographical reading of France in relation to the Harki memory that she recovers: 'Directement liée à la notion de l'espace, la postmémoire prend un caractère géographique chez Kerchouche'.<sup>335</sup> Her journeys around the camps and to Algeria therefore leads to her conclusion for a full confrontation with the past and its persistent tensions of memory. Where Kerchouche uncovers the experiences of her parents and siblings in the broader context of France's treatment of the Harkis in an administrative system marked by its spatial organization, she finds in conclusion that 'tout était donc programmé, planifié. Une législation parallèle a géré les harkis, pour les acculturer, les briser, les soumettre'.<sup>336</sup> Her determination to interpret these conditions and situate her family's fate in a broader history also reflects her interest in making effective critical use of these physical locations as reference points for investigations into the past that would aid the transmission of memory. Such an approach also provides an important counterweight to the persistence of claims of abandonment and powerlessness of the sort emphasized by Crapanzano in his contention that 'Harki history is a history of negated spaces'.<sup>337</sup> Through her method of charting memory in relation to place, Kerchouche makes use of the physical sites as a measure of the advances made independently by Harki families in response to conditions since their arrival in France. These locations also serve as a valuable basis for critical reflections in the present.

After this itinerary around France and the associated marginal status recounted in each of the texts, the camp at Rivesaltes, assessed by both Kerchouche and Besnaci-Lancou for

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<sup>334</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, pp. 128–9.

<sup>335</sup> Howell, 'Sur les traces d'un père', p. 419.

<sup>336</sup> Kerchouche, *Mon père, ce Harki*, pp. 188–9.

<sup>337</sup> Crapanzano, *The Harkis: The Wound that Never Heals*, p. 193.

its harsh conditions and significance as an entry point into France, provides a particularly significant reference point for the establishment of a clear archival trace of the sort suggested by Nora as necessary to forming an effective reference point for collective memory. The camp reached a peak population of near 10,000 in October 1962, the height of the influx of Harkis into France, propelled by the crisis and policies of resettlement.<sup>338</sup> Further to Kerchouche's account, Besnaci-Lancou recounts this administrative system organizing their environment, as Rivesaltes provided a measure for classifying Harki men fit for work and possible further redeployment: 'Nous attendions patiemment notre tour. Le camp ressemblait à une immense salle d'attente.'<sup>339</sup> The lasting effect of this treatment at Rivesaltes, and the system established by French authorities in response to a sudden influx of Harkis is clear, as she develops awareness of the strong connections between spatial and social marginality: 'Cet endroit, qui ressemblait tellement à une prison, allait cristalliser notre sentiment d'abandon. Il est entré dans notre mémoire collective.'<sup>340</sup> If, as Eldridge contends, the conditions of Rivesaltes and other camps served to inform the issues of recognition and reparation pursued by a generation raised in France, the employment of geographical reference in order to frame memory, particularly the approach adopted by Kerchouche, aims to challenge the perpetuation of a sense of abandonment. As demonstrated through the textual analysis that this chapter has carried out, authors who investigate the experiences of their families and question personal connections to the fate of a large community in France interrogate both the conditions in which experiences of resettlement occurred and the means by which marginalization has been maintained. These narrators thus consistently work to conceptualize a form of Harki memory that is rooted firmly and positively in France. In the situation that this chapter has analysed of persistent tensions and contested public

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<sup>338</sup> Abderahmen Moumen, 'Camp de Rivesaltes, Camp de Saint-Maurice l'Ardoise: L'accueil et le reclassement des harkis en France (1962–1964)', *Les Temps Modernes*, 66 (2011), 105–19 (p. 107).

<sup>339</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 78.

<sup>340</sup> Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de Harki*, p. 80.

representations of Harkis and their descendants as a constituency of memory in contemporary France, the engagement with connections between memory and spatiality that these narrators explore serve most effectively their critical voices and original perspectives.

### Chapter 3: Contemporary Narratives and Localities of *pied-noir* Memory

The former European settlers (*pieds-noirs*) who left Algeria in the period surrounding independence in 1962 form part of the population of contemporary France. Due to their connections to the lasting effects of decolonization, they are one constituency among the several that Stora and Harbi term ‘porteurs de cette mémoire diffuse’ relating to the Algerian War and its cultural and political afterlives.<sup>341</sup> Awareness of bearing and transmitting a collective memory has indeed been acute among *pieds-noirs* and their descendants following their resettlement in France. The experience of a mass population shift provoked by the negotiated end of colonial rule and a climate of retributive violence in Algeria has been central to expressions of collective memory among this population since 1962. At the height of the crisis of decolonization, as Abderahmen Moumen explains, ‘le reflux des Français d’Algérie s’accélère pour devenir un exode brutal et désordonné’, with a peak of 450,000 departures in May and June 1962 alone.<sup>342</sup> The forced departure from Algeria has also made themes of connection to territory and of dispossession central to representations of subsequent resettlement. In his study of France’s political transformation into a post-colonial state in 1962, Todd Shepard notes that the intensity of traumatic experiences associated with the exodus resulted from the lack of preparation on the part of metropolitan authorities for the mass arrival of *pieds-noirs*, the majority of whom had been expected to remain in Algeria.<sup>343</sup> These conditions of departure from Algeria and arrival in the metropolitan centre have long motivated reflection among former colonial settlers on their continually problematic status within France. For Martin Evans, the period of mass resettlement in the summer of 1962 ‘was the moment when the term *pied-noir* entered common currency as a marker of their

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<sup>341</sup> Stora and Harbi, ‘La guerre d’Algérie: de la mémoire à l’Histoire’, p. 9.

<sup>342</sup> Abderahmen Moumen, ‘De l’Algérie à la France. Les conditions de départ et d’accueil des rapatriés, *pieds-noirs* et harkis en 1962’, *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps*, 99 (2010), 60–68 (p. 63).

<sup>343</sup> Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, p. 207.

separate history from other French people'.<sup>344</sup> While this population has achieved successful economic integration into metropolitan society in the subsequent decades, a continued sense of social and political separation as a group within France is nonetheless identifiable alongside grievances that persist in the present regarding the consequences of Algerian independence. The focus of the present chapter is on the literary and museological representations by which this separation has been perpetuated, and on conceptualizations of alternative frameworks for collective memory.

As a result of awareness among *pieds-noirs* of occupying an exceptional position, tensions have arisen consistently regarding relations with the French state, as well as engagement with other constituencies of memory in France. As Fiona Barclay argues in a recent study of the development of their image and status, the *pieds-noirs* were effectively defined as a distinct community with a common identity only by the events of 1962 and their representation: 'The exodus can therefore be construed as a community-constitutive myth which shapes the establishment of relations between the community and wider society.'<sup>345</sup> The subsequent development of further myths, used here as Robert Gildea does to mean 'in the sense of a construction of the past elaborated by a political community for its own political ends',<sup>346</sup> has been enhanced by a lasting concern for exclusive self-representation in France. In particular, myths of victimization and betrayal by metropolitan authorities have motivated the pursuit by former settlers of political and legal recognition. For Claire Eldridge, a major factor in the achievement of a prominent and influential position for *pied-noir* claims has been the engagement by a section of this population in community organizations and political lobbying: 'Capitalizing on a particularly French organizational penchant, one of the principal ways *pieds-noirs* have

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<sup>344</sup> Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War*, p. 351.

<sup>345</sup> Fiona Barclay, 'Reporting on 1962: the Evolution of pied-noir Identity across 50 Years of Print Media', *Modern & Contemporary France*, 23:2 (2015), 197–211 (p. 204).

<sup>346</sup> Gildea, *The Past in French History*, p. 12.

sought redress for their grievances is through associations.<sup>347</sup> A particularly significant result of this politicized *pied-noir* memory activism, and a focus for the present chapter, has been the development of physical sites of memory that have affirmed and propagated reactions against decolonization. Accounts of departure from Algeria and resettlement in France by *pieds-noirs* have, above all, been characterized by expressions of nostalgia, an emotion defined generally by Svetlana Boym as ‘a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed’.<sup>348</sup> As a response to uprooting, nostalgia is relative to the situation of displacement in which it is generated and the territory that is evoked in expressions of longing. Representations in both physical sites and cultural media of a lost past in Algeria for *pieds-noirs* must therefore be analysed in the context of a post-colonial society in contemporary France.

To elucidate further the critical approach pursued in this chapter, the distinction established by Patricia Lorcin between two different types of nostalgia for empire is instructive. According to Lorcin: ‘Imperial’ nostalgia ‘is associated with loss of empire; colonial nostalgia with the loss of socio-cultural standing.’<sup>349</sup> Where ‘imperial’ nostalgia therefore relates to France’s former status as a power with an overseas empire, the specifically ‘colonial’ form that has shaped *pied-noir* perspectives in France since 1962 concerns the structure of social relations that maintained a hegemonic status and that was ended definitively by Algerian independence. Although the two forms are closely connected, a focus on the latter will be pursued in the present chapter for its correspondence to the emphasis placed consistently on the loss of both territory and status in *pied-noir* accounts of the consequences of decolonization. As colonial rule in Algeria and the maintenance of the dominant status of a minority European population

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<sup>347</sup> Eldridge, ‘Blurring the boundaries between perpetrators and victims: *Pied-noir* memories and the *barkai* community’, p. 124.

<sup>348</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. xiii.

<sup>349</sup> Patricia M. E. Lorcin, *Historicizing Colonial Nostalgia: European Women’s Narratives of Algeria and Kenya 1900–Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 9.



was centred on the control of territory, furthermore, physical space is identifiable as a crucial vector of nostalgic representations of the colonial past among former settlers. Henri Lefebvre's concept of space as a product of social relations is also an important starting point for analysis of the persistence of expressions of colonial nostalgia.<sup>350</sup> In particular, the application of Lefebvre to questions of *pied-noir* memory concerns the ways in which physical environments contained and reinforced the hegemonic social structures imposed during colonial rule. Attention to how spatial reference frames representations of the colonial past in Algeria involves, accordingly, awareness of the claims to territory made in contemporary forms of memorialization. A key component of the nostalgic perspective transmitted through *pied-noir* practices of commemoration is the geographical reference included in the recollection of former territories that were lost with the end of the colonial period. For Lorcin, equally, expressions of colonial nostalgia are understood as being structured by the conditions of social relations in the former colonial territory to which they refer: 'In the colonial context, the possibility of loss – of power, of territory, of the upper hand – was an ever-present, if subliminal anxiety.'<sup>351</sup> This sensitivity to positions and their potential reversal also serves to make nostalgia a notably defensive attitude. The ways in which space is 'produced' by colonial relations therefore relates to both the colonial period in Algeria and the contemporary representations in France of the colonial past that reify dividing lines. In light of ongoing memorial conflicts, furthermore, literary texts that engage with, and attempt to mediate, aspects of the colonial past present significant broadened perspectives on it through their forms of representation.

While, as the present chapter discusses, the influential position of *pied-noir* claims has been supported and reinforced by physical monuments and a major presence in the

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<sup>350</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 33.

<sup>351</sup> Lorcin, *Historicizing Colonial Nostalgia*, p. 10.

memorial landscape of contemporary France, processes of mourning for the colonial past have long been encoded in the transmission of memory among this former settler population. As Edward Welch and Joseph McGonagle note, ‘the scenario of dislocation and marginalisation with which the *pied-noir* community was confronted inevitably proved to be fertile ground for a growing sense of nostalgia, which found expression across a range of cultural forms’.<sup>352</sup> In this context, literature has served as a particularly crucial medium for the negotiation of *pied-noir* experiences of uprooting and resettlement from colonial Algeria. Amy Hubbell observes how the expression of pain appears as a common theme across narratives by female *pied-noir* authors that attempt to present a stable connection to a lost past: ‘nostalgia functions as an analgesic, but not as a cure, for the separation from Algeria.’<sup>353</sup> As well as personal reflections, the writing of connections to geographical place has been important in *pied-noir* accounts in defining the subject of nostalgic longing and the affirmation of a claim to collective memory and belonging within France. In his 1994 survey of narratives that were produced in response to the exodus in the years immediately following Algerian independence, Philip Dine highlights the role of literary texts by authors drawn from the settler population in supporting claims to territory and an image of the *pieds-noirs* as a victimized group. In particular, Dine identifies the consistent feature of efforts at self-justification, as well as the encoding of the twin myths of a pioneering spirit and subsequent dispossession.<sup>354</sup> Where fallout from events in 1962 has remained a focus, such attachment to a partial, selective view of the past can have the effect of producing an all-encompassing historical and political counter-narrative centred on settler victimization.

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<sup>352</sup> Welch and McGonagle, *Contesting Views: The Visual Economy of France and Algeria*, p. 18.

<sup>353</sup> Amy L. Hubbell, ‘The Wounds of Algeria in Pied-Noir Autobiography’, *Dalhousie French Studies*, 81 (Winter 2007), 59–68 (p. 59).

<sup>354</sup> Dine, *Images of the Algerian War*, p. 163.

In addition to the political uses of the past that were highlighted by Gildea and which remain relevant to the prominence of memory activist groups among former settlers, the persistent attachment to *pied-noir* memory of myths also encompasses representations in literary texts that deal with a continually closed vision of the past. In this regard, the present chapter also acknowledges the analytical approach established by Roland Barthes, for whom myths reflected a greater social structure and had the effect of giving to contingent, culturally produced phenomena a natural, fixed appearance: 'la fin même des mythes, c'est d'immobiliser le monde.'<sup>355</sup> Where manifestations of claims to territory and community-specific myths of belonging have remained a constant in representations of *pied-noir* memory, they have also flourished in a broader favourable political climate and have, furthermore, been reinforced by inscriptions into public space that maintain an overall imbalanced memorial landscape in France.

Where nostalgia tied to the evocation of geographical place functioned as a coping strategy in the aftermath of exodus in 1962, the persistence of this emotion and its attachment to *pied-noir* memory in contemporary France is also a significant focus for criticism. Although a continued sense of separation within France has been expressed in representations of *pied-noir* experiences since 1962, contemporary literary works that deal with this collective memory and senses of belonging to a community demonstrate a significant progression in perspectives. There is, in particular, increased reflection on the position of *pieds-noirs* and their descendants in relation to the other constituencies of memory of colonial Algeria in contemporary France. Recent critical attention has also been drawn to the range of literary texts published in recent years that engage with the transmission and mediation of *pied-noir* memory and lasting legacies of decolonization.<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957), p. 229.

<sup>356</sup> For a discussion of a recent corpus of narratives that engage specifically with *pied-noir* community memory, see Richard Spiteri, 'Les Français d'Algérie cinquante ans après: l'Histoire à l'épreuve de la fiction', *Journal of Maltese History*, 3:2 (2013), 28–35.

It is, therefore, the contention of the present chapter that texts produced within the last decade that are representative of a generational shift in perspectives seek, in contrast with earlier literary representations of uprooting and exile, to resolve tensions and disrupt conditions that serve to support and perpetuate nostalgia. They do so by engaging critically with both contemporary political conditions surrounding colonial memory and the significant forms of spatial reference by which nostalgic attitudes and *pied-noir* claims of grievance and exceptionalism have persisted.

Following a study of examples of commemorative practices and the prevalent politicized myths attached to a population in France of former colonial settlers, analysis in the present chapter of recent literary texts will consider renewed evaluations of the problematic expression of *pied-noir* memory. This will involve a focus on two texts, one by Annelise Roux and the other by Anne Plantagenet. In *La solitude de la fleur blanche* (2009), Roux, born in France to parents resettled from Algeria, presents a series of reflections on her family's experiences of exile, as well as a personal malaise stemming from an inherited memory over which she has had no control. Her overall intention throughout the text is to negotiate effectively this inheritance, as well as to establish a form of critical distance from a more general image of *pieds-noirs* tied to the nostalgic evocation of former territory. This longing for a stable reference to the former home in Algeria was driven, as Jean-Jacques Jordi identifies, by anxieties over reception and incorporation into France from 1962 onwards.<sup>357</sup> However, the continued identification as *pied-noir* and the negative associations attached to the status in France of former colonial settlers is targeted by Roux as a burden that she must overcome. The introspective and often confessional tone employed by Roux combines with her awareness of formative surroundings and influences in France. Further to the

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<[https://www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/209591/JMH\\_2013\\_-\\_Richard\\_spiteri.pdf](https://www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/209591/JMH_2013_-_Richard_spiteri.pdf)> [accessed 21 April 2016].

<sup>357</sup> Jordi, *Les pieds-noirs*, p.171.

questioning that is carried out in Roux's account of confinement to categories of *pied-noir* identity and connections to nostalgia, Plantagenet, who was also born in France after 1962, assesses her personal inheritance and considers means for the effective intergenerational transmission of memory in *Trois jours à Oran* (2014). Plantagenet's text pursues a more direct investigatory approach than that of Roux, however, as it takes the form of a travelogue of the journey to Algeria made by the narrator with her father. Plantagenet works to unlock connections of memory and geographical place, as well as breaking the previous reluctance of her father to engage in remembrance of his former home. Overall, both of these second-generation narrators present original strategies of interpretation and representation as they pursue a definitive resolution to what they identify as incomplete processes of remembrance at both individual and collective levels.

The respective efforts of Roux and Plantagenet to interrogate the workings of *pied-noir* memory, in particular its rooting in spatial reference, are based on personal engagements and family connections. Their interests, therefore, are in reframing the collective memory to which they are connected and divesting themselves of any presumed claims to territory. As they work from within dynamics of an inherited memory, moreover, the critical contextualization and challenges to prevalent myths that both authors pursue are also motivated by awareness of the senses of separation and selective self-representation that have remained associated with the *pieds-noirs* as a constituency of memory in France. This separation as a community is a central factor of what Eric Savarèse has termed the 'ego-histoire' of the *pieds-noirs* in France since 1962, with attitudes particularly prevalent in the claims pursued by memory activism.<sup>358</sup> Accounts of exile and resettlement in France, Savarèse notes, have been produced and published almost exclusively from within this community, with marked opposition to proposals for external mediation and the incorporation of alternative voices. As they demonstrate critical awareness of the

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<sup>358</sup> Eric Savarèse, *L'invention des pieds-noirs* (Paris: Séguier, 2002), p. 34.

attachment of *pied-noir* community memory to politicized myths and historical counter-narratives, Roux and Plantagenet develop nuanced assessments of settler experiences in pursuit of forms of effective resolution to lasting tensions. Analysis of these two texts focuses on the range of poetics and form that are employed as part of the authors' efforts to update and broaden the contemporary frames of reference for *pied-noir* memory. This approach to form and style also follows the observation by Jane Hiddleston of the importance in postcolonial literary criticism of renewed attention to poetic practices and the ways in which 'literature can alter how we think and, even more, can constitute a mode of thought of its own'.<sup>359</sup> The literary invention and critical reflection demonstrated by Roux and Plantagenet is thus particularly significant for the responses to a climate of engagement with the colonial past in contemporary France. The original forms of remembrance elaborated in these contemporary texts will, furthermore, be analysed in counterpoint to the practices of memorialization that have had a significant effect of provoking and reifying divisions.

### **Locating colonial nostalgia**

Prior to analysis of the texts by Roux and Plantagenet and the forms for negotiating colonial legacies that they represent, a discussion of contested recent initiatives for memorialization will establish the context within which proposals for mediation and plural forms of memory are situated. Physical sites of memory that support and strengthen accounts of colonial nostalgia are often, notably, concentrated in specific regions and demonstrate the distinct unevenness of a postcolonial memorial landscape in contemporary France. As well as literary analysis, the study in the present chapter of connections between memory and spatiality develops by engaging with Lydie Moudileno's call for a form of 'provincialization' serving 'to rework the cartography of

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<sup>359</sup> Hiddleston, 'Introduction', in *Postcolonial Poetics: Genre and Form*, p. 2.

postcolonial France'.<sup>360</sup> Such an approach involves the incorporation of sites on geographical peripheries of the nation into an assessment of France's contemporary postcolonial dynamics. For Moudileno, the 'postcolonial provinces' are locations in France to be considered not merely in contrast to a dominant Parisian centre, but also as reference points for efforts to re-focus and broaden approaches to collective memory. As demonstrated previously in the case of Harki memory, an itinerary of camps and peripheral locations, representative of combined spatial and social marginality, shaped collective experiences for this specific group. The same locations also served as the basis for critical processes of reinterpretation carried out by female authors of a younger generation raised in France. However, in contrast to the long-term marginality experienced by Harki families and their corresponding lack of political voice, the perspectives of *pieds-noirs*, while also often concentrated in peripheral regions as a result of resettlement, have long been prominent and clearly represented in France. In the outline of this spatially focused approach to the active legacies and traces of colonialism, Moudileno identified, in particular, locations in the south of France as key sites for studies of both colonial history and contemporary postcolonial encounters, owing to significant factors of resettlement of the population from Algeria.<sup>361</sup> In addition to the prominent position and political engagements of *pied-noir* claims represented by groups involved in memory activism, connections to factors of place and locality have been employed repeatedly in practices of memorialization. The following section considers how recent investments in memorial sites and initiatives for commemoration by local authorities in towns with significant *pied-noir* populations, particularly those in peripheral regions of the south of France, have exacerbated divisions and tensions at a national level. In each case, demands of partial, group memory that continually provoke division

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<sup>360</sup> Moudileno, 'The Postcolonial Provinces', p. 60.

<sup>361</sup> Moudileno cited the Rhône valley, and the cities of Lyon and Marseille, as an important focus for study. See Moudileno, 'The Postcolonial Provinces', p. 61.

are elevated to the status of officially sanctioned history. In the first instance, this will involve assessment of an example in Béziers of how politicized practices of memorialization have led to the reinforcement of colonial nostalgia.

In March 2015, the independent far-right mayor of Béziers (*département* of Hérault), Robert Ménard, presided over a commemoration involving the revision of reference in the public space to the Algerian War. This ceremony was focused on the renaming of a street in the town from its previous incarnation of ‘rue du 19 Mars 1962’ – marking the Evian accords that ended the Algerian War – to ‘rue Commandant de Saint-Marc’, honouring the former officer Hélié Denoix de Saint-Marc.<sup>362</sup> A staunch defender of French colonial rule in Algeria, Saint-Marc was a participant in the attempted coup of April 1961 against de Gaulle after the French government’s move towards political negotiation of independence with Algerian nationalists. Where he is celebrated as a subject of commemoration in Béziers, Saint-Marc is promoted to the status of ‘héros français’.<sup>363</sup> As Evans notes, however, the failure of the revolt by a section of the military in Algeria to gather wider support in metropolitan France against negotiations for Algerian independence signalled a clear shift in attitudes and a turn towards the definitive end of French colonial rule.<sup>364</sup> The position accorded to such a figure clearly serves to support grievances symptomatic of colonial nostalgia among sections of a *pied-noir* population. In Béziers, this specific policy was proclaimed by Ménard, in his speech to inaugurate the renamed street, as being motivated by his intention ‘effacer la honte du 19

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<sup>362</sup> Anne Devailly, “‘L’Algérie, c’est notre paradis’, lance Ménard en débaptisant une rue de Béziers’, *Le Monde*, 14 March 2015, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2015/03/14/a-beziers-robert-menard-reecrit-l-histoire-de-l-algerie-francaise-en-debaptisant-une-rue\\_4593725\\_823448.html#FbUpTVucpyCQUSkK.99](http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2015/03/14/a-beziers-robert-menard-reecrit-l-histoire-de-l-algerie-francaise-en-debaptisant-une-rue_4593725_823448.html#FbUpTVucpyCQUSkK.99)> [accessed 16 March 2015].

<sup>363</sup> ‘Béziers: Ménard débaptise une rue et ravive la nostalgie de l’Algérie française’, *Midi Libre*, 14 March 2015, <<http://www.midilibre.fr/2015/03/14/menard-effacer-la-honte-du-19-mars-1962,1135606.php#>> [accessed 16 March 2015].

<sup>364</sup> Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War*, p. 299.



Mars' and promote references for a counter-memory of the colonial past in Algeria.<sup>365</sup>

The primary motive for this act of public revisionism is a reaction against the law passed in 2012 by the Socialist government that made 19 March an annual day of national commemoration for all victims of the conflict.<sup>366</sup> The attempted reversal of historical reference pursued in Béziers indicates, above all, a rejection of contemporary France's postcolonial status and a political instrumentalization of memory that maintains an alignment of *pied-noir* positions with reactionary attitudes.

The public honouring of Saint-Marc in this inscription into public space was presented by Ménard in the form of an appeal to the community memory of a large *pied-noir* population present in Béziers, and across the south of France, since 1962. At the ceremony for the renaming of the street, Ménard, himself born in Algeria to a *pied-noir* family and resettled in France, drew on consistent themes of territorial loss for a settler population that resulted from the perceived betrayal by metropolitan French authorities. For a population that identifies as being in continued exile in France, the territory of Algeria and system of colonial rule defended by figures such as Saint-Marc is framed by Ménard as 'ce paradis qu'on nous a enlevé, ce paradis qui hante, plus de cinquante ans plus tard, nos cœurs et nos mémoires'.<sup>367</sup> A stable connection to former lives in Algeria and an ability to recover aspects of the colonial past are therefore crucial to the form of collective memory and nostalgia promoted by Ménard. The opposition represented by this specific, localized memorial to the commemoration of aspects of a contested colonial past introduced at a national level in France – in particular the recent initiative

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<sup>365</sup> Robert Ménard, 'Discours de l'inauguration de la rue Commandant Denoix de Saint Marc', 14 March 2015, <<http://www.ville-beziers.fr/decouvrir-beziers/agenda/inauguration-de-la-rue-commandant-denoix-de-saint-marc-0>> [accessed 16 March 2015].

<sup>366</sup> 'Loi n° 2012-1361 du 6 décembre 2012 relative à la reconnaissance du 19 mars comme journée nationale du souvenir et de recueillement à la mémoire des victimes civiles et militaires de la guerre d'Algérie et des combats en Tunisie et au Maroc', <<http://legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000026733612&categorieLien=id>> [accessed 6 May 2016].

<sup>367</sup> Ménard, 'Discours de l'inauguration de la rue Commandant Denoix de Saint Marc'

for 19 March – involves repeated emphasis on the exceptional status of the former settler population. Barclay also contends that initiatives for exclusive *pied-noir* commemoration in recent years, of which Béziers is one among several, have been presented consistently as acts of resistance to the perceived weakening of their prominent status and relativization as one constituency of memory among a plurality in France.<sup>368</sup> Consistent with his personal defence of the interests of a *pied-noir* community, Ménard argues for the distinction accorded to Saint-Marc and the broader implications of his legacy as a challenge to the definitive separation imposed by the Evian accords of 1962, which are dismissed as ‘ce renoncement à ce que fut la France, à ce que fut la grandeur de ce pays, de notre pays’.<sup>369</sup> This effort to rehabilitate the colonial system through its nostalgic portrayal therefore involves a repetition of past conflicts and claims to possession of territory.

The policy on the renaming of the street in Béziers, approved by the town’s *conseil municipal*, forms one part of a broader reactionary agenda pursued by Ménard since his election in 2014.<sup>370</sup> This has also featured his involvement, in an official capacity as mayor, in commemoration of the extremists of the *Organisation de l’Armée Secrète* (OAS), the armed group that pursued a campaign of violent attacks in an attempted defence of *Algérie française* at the climax of the conflict.<sup>371</sup> These claims to definitive representation of *pied-noir* memory have a further polarizing effect. As Shepard notes in his study of France’s process of decolonization, a contributing factor to the problematic image of the *pieds-noirs* and their perceived incompatibility with metropolitan France was the elision of

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<sup>368</sup> Barclay, ‘Reporting on 1962’ p. 208.

<sup>369</sup> Ménard, ‘Discours de l’inauguration de la rue Commandant Denoix de Saint Marc’

<sup>370</sup> Fanny Lesbros, ‘Robert Ménard refait la guerre d’Algérie dans les rues de Béziers’, *Libération*, 5 December 2014, <[http://www.liberation.fr/politiques/2014/12/05/robert-menard-refait-la-guerre-d-algerie-dans-les-rues-de-beziers\\_1157270](http://www.liberation.fr/politiques/2014/12/05/robert-menard-refait-la-guerre-d-algerie-dans-les-rues-de-beziers_1157270)> [accessed 16 March 2015].

<sup>371</sup> Laura Thouny, ‘Béziers: Ménard s’incline devant une stèle glorifiant l’OAS’, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 10 July 2014, <<http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/politique/20140710.OBS3393/beziers-menard-s-incline-devant-une-stele-glorifiant-l-oas.html>> [accessed 16 March 2015].

their image with that of the OAS.<sup>372</sup> Equally, while the OAS is presented in Béziers as a subject for commemoration in line with a mood of colonial nostalgia, the extreme violence perpetrated by this group contributed to the crisis that made the position of the settler population untenable and resulted in the mass exodus in the final months of the conflict. Efforts to rehabilitate the OAS reflect, as Alain Ruscio argues in his study of the persistence of the group's legacy and appeal, a consistent reactionary attitude.<sup>373</sup> For Ménard, overall, the legacies of both Saint-Marc as an individual and the OAS as an organization present a consistent value of resistance to metropolitan authorities that is applied, in the present, to the perceived threat to a *pied-noir* community memory and identity. This localized opposition to other commemorations initiated by central government also has the effect of deepening a situation of polarized colonial memory at a national level in France.

### ***Pied-noir* memorials and the politics of colonial memory**

While Ménard's investments in physical sites of counter-memory present specific forms of rehabilitation of colonial legacies, Béziers is not an isolated case of divisive commemoration in contemporary France. It in fact provides the latest example of a location in the south of France where policies on commemoration of the Algerian past support and sustain attitudes of colonial nostalgia. This selective memorialization is made possible by the significant, and interconnected, factors of local politics and the influence enjoyed by interest groups that lay claim to representing *pied-noir* collective memory in their pursuit of historical revision. In his 2005 study of the 'vestiges' of empire in public space and memorials in France, Robert Aldrich identifies how, 'in the Midi colonial

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<sup>372</sup> Todd Shepard, 'Pieds-Noirs, Bêtes Noires: Anti-"European of Algeria" Racism and the Close of the French Empire', in *Algeria & France 1800–2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia*, ed. by Patricia M.E. Lorcin (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), pp. 150–63 (p. 151).

<sup>373</sup> Alain Ruscio, *Nostalgie: L'interminable histoire de l'OAS* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015), pp. 9–10.

memory is most nourished'.<sup>374</sup> Although his focus is on monuments preserved from the period of France's overseas imperial rule, the attention paid by Aldrich to factors of geographical locations remains relevant to contemporary forms of memorialization and contested representations of France's Algerian past. His assessment of how locations in the south of France, particularly around the Mediterranean coast, demonstrate lasting connections to France's colonial empire is, furthermore, also applicable to a survey of memorial sites established in recent years that are focused specifically on *pied-noir* perspectives and expressions of political grievances. In addition to the initiatives for commemoration in Béziers outlined above, other locations across the Midi that are home to significant *pied-noir* populations, for example Perpignan (Pyrénées-Orientales) and Aix-en-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône), also host memorials and commemorations that support forms of colonial nostalgia. Attention to how geographical factors inform collective memory in France, particularly concerning contemporary population dynamics, requires engagement with the localized concentrations of colonial legacies highlighted by Moudileno. A focus on locations in the Midi marked by resettlement from Algeria also involves questioning the contested nature of recent memorial sites and the reinforcement of divisions that results from the persistence of exclusive *pied-noir* claims among a population in contemporary France comprising several constituencies of memory.

The effect produced by recent memorial sites of a crystallization of *pied-noir* memory around objects of colonial nostalgia has contributed significantly to the fractious nature of debates regarding recognition of the Algerian past in France. In his 2006 study of the development of a community after repatriation, Savarèse emphasizes how a general image of the *pieds-noirs* became connected closely to the more specific political interests of memory activist groups, to the extent that: 'Il n'existe donc une mémoire pied-noir

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<sup>374</sup> Robert Aldrich, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France: Monuments, Museums and Colonial Memories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 91.

que dans l'espace d'un discours militant.<sup>375</sup> In light of the reinforcement by museological and memorial practices of divisions between constituencies of Algerian memory, analysis in the present chapter of the means by which partial forms of *pied-noir* memory and colonial nostalgia are continually 'nourished' and sustained in these locations also requires attention to the political conditions favourable to such revisionism. From the starting point of the exodus and problematic resettlement in 1962, the *pieds-noirs*, notes Barclay, have established themselves as 'a community whose voice has been incorporated within the nation's collective memory, and whose concerns are central to the memories of the period'.<sup>376</sup> Barclay considers this progression of the status of the *pieds-noirs* specifically through the framework of media coverage, a significant vector of their integration and normalization. The public dominance of *pied-noir* interests over other constituencies of colonial memory since 1962 has also been sustained to a significant degree by political support for memorial sites and forms of nostalgic commemoration, as demonstrated in the case studies of specific recent episodes. In a study of the rise in electoral success of the Front National in the 1990s, Benjamin Stora identifies the value attached to the condition of "sudisme", a political attitude that he defines as 'le signe d'un état d'esprit, d'une mentalité très particulière, apparue en France dans les combats désespérés pour la sauvegarde de l'Algérie française'.<sup>377</sup> More recent research on French electoral politics has, furthermore, observed strong correlation between areas of significant *pied-noir* population in the Midi, and support for far-right parties, particularly the Front National. This support is notably at its strongest among electors who are also members of community organizations.<sup>378</sup> The case studies in the present chapter of

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<sup>375</sup> Eric Savarèse, 'Après la guerre d'Algérie: la diversité des recompositions identitaires des pieds-noirs', *Revue internationale des sciences sociales*, 189 (2006), 491–500 (p. 495).

<sup>376</sup> Barclay, 'Reporting on 1962', p. 198.

<sup>377</sup> Benjamin Stora, *Le transfert d'une mémoire: De l'"Algérie Française" au racisme anti-arabe* (Paris: La Découverte, 1999), p. 21.

<sup>378</sup> John Veuglers, Gabriel Menard and Pierre Permingeat, 'Colonial Past, Voluntary Association and Far-right voting in France', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38:5 (2015), 775–91 (p. 776).

locations in the south of France also, however, demonstrate how engagements in the ‘nourishing’ of colonial nostalgia among parties in the centre ground of French politics reflect the continued strength of lobbying and the political capital invested in such interests.

The factors by which strong concentrations of *pied-noir* populations gain influence in specific geographical locations have led to the repeated political instrumentalization of colonial memory and the perpetuation of significant dividing lines. The particular electoral value attached to the representation of *pied-noir* interests has, furthermore, had the effect of making towns in the Midi enclaves of a politicized colonial nostalgia and strongholds of opposition to initiatives for commemoration proposed at a national level. In relation to the continued divisions regarding recognition of the Algerian colonial past in contemporary France, the concept proposed by Halbwachs of social frames of remembrance is significant for its emphasis on the ways in which the recall of subjects of memory is informed by concerns in the present.<sup>379</sup> While Halbwachs’s model was focused on the study of individual belonging to groups, its assessment of the expression and communication of memory also provides a basis, as Paul Connerton argues, for the study of the processes such as commemorative ceremonies that render acts of collective remembering possible.<sup>380</sup> This approach informs the analysis in the context of the present chapter of how factors of community identity arising from legacies of the Algerian War have been deployed repeatedly to maintain a compartmentalization of colonial memory. The transfer of colonial mentalities from French Algeria to the former metropolitan centre that was identified by Stora as the condition of ‘sudisme’ has had a particularly stark effect on attitudes towards postcolonial immigration.<sup>381</sup> In the case of the rhetoric employed by Ménard in Béziers, for example, common ground between

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<sup>379</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 53.

<sup>380</sup> Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 39.

<sup>381</sup> Stora, *Le transfert d’une mémoire*, p. 16.

evocation of the colonial past and far-right policies motivates emphasis on essentialized and ethnicized identity. Ménard's policy for the commemoration of Saint-Marc was framed not only as part of a defence of the memory of colonial Algeria, but also as an act of denial of contemporary social dynamics in France. Ménard's discourse furthermore provides an example of how, while claiming stability of reference to an idealized Algerian past, the marriage of colonial nostalgia and reactionary politics produces a continually shifting and updating attitude of opposition to policies in the contemporary Republic. Through the commemoration of a defender of the colonial system in Algeria, Ménard implored his audience: 'Dire non à cette France multiculturelle qu'on nous impose.'<sup>382</sup> In addition to the loss of Algeria, therefore, postcolonial immigration to France is presented as a further threat to a *pied-noir* population and a motivation for investment in counter-memory. This outline of the recent efforts in Béziers to rehabilitate aspects of a contentious, unresolved colonial past has enabled identification of the major fault lines that govern engagement with collective memory and the legacies of the French colonial system in Algeria. Further critical attention will now be applied to Perpignan, where a strong concentration of reactionary politics and colonial nostalgia has repeatedly found a successful outlet in museology and selective historical representation.

## Perpignan

As one location among several in the Midi with a large *pied-noir* population present since 1962, Perpignan has particular significance as a case study due to the successful realization in recent years of a series of memorial sites. Through specific investment in monuments to the colonial past and initiatives for commemoration, Perpignan has become, as Roger Hillel described it in 2015, 'la capitale des nostalgiques'.<sup>383</sup> The present evaluation of the contemporary state of memorialization in Perpignan traces the

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<sup>382</sup> Ménard, 'Discours de l'inauguration de la rue Commandant Denoix de Saint Marc'.

<sup>383</sup> Roger Hillel, *La triade nostalgique: Stèle, mur, musée de Perpignan* (Ceret: Alter Ego Editions, 2015), p. 15.

development of these sites and considers their implications for the continued tensions raised by the political afterlives of the Algerian War and colonialism in France. The prominent position accorded to attitudes of colonial nostalgia in the town results, in large part, from the involvement of local authorities favouring political claims relating to *pied-noir* memory and acting in the role of what Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard term 'entrepreneurs de mémoire'.<sup>384</sup> As with Ménard's personal involvement in commemoration in Béziers, Jean-Marc Pujol, mayor (Les Républicains) since 2009, is a crucial figure in the development of the town's specific memorial landscape.<sup>385</sup> A notable feature in Perpignan is the accumulation of sites over several years, starting with a memorial that honours members of the OAS, erected in 2003. This was followed by the inauguration in 2007 of the *Mémorial des disparus*, commemorating *pied-noir* victims of Algerian nationalist violence. As also found in Béziers, however, an overall tone of mourning for a lost territory and the structure of social relations under colonial rule is incorporated into these monuments. This commemorative activity in Perpignan focused exclusively on *pied-noir* claims was further strengthened by the 2012 inauguration of the *Centre de documentation des français d'Algérie* (CDDFA), identified above by Lorcin as a project intended to institutionalize a partial memory and revisionist accounts of France's Algerian past. Each of these sites therefore represents a successful effort to rehabilitate aspects of France's colonial past and together constitute what Hillel terms 'la triade nostalgérique', making the town a stronghold of revisionist forms of commemoration.<sup>386</sup>

A significant basis to this approach to partial and divisive memorialization in Perpignan is found in the monument to members of the OAS. It was inaugurated in 2003 in the presence of Pujol (then deputy mayor), and honours members of the extremist

<sup>384</sup> Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard, 'Mémoire coloniale: Résistances à l'émergence d'un débat', in *Culture post-coloniale 1961-2006*, ed. by Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2006), pp. 22–41 (p. 23).

<sup>385</sup> Jean-Marc Pujol, Maire de la ville de Perpignan <<http://www.mairie-perpignan.fr/fr/la-municipalite/les-elus/le-maire>> [accessed 10 August 2015].

<sup>386</sup> Hillel, *La triade nostalgérique*, p. 15.



organisation convicted and executed in France after the Algerian war.<sup>387</sup> As in Béziers, this effort to rehabilitate the OAS through commemoration makes a claim for the status of the organization as a legitimate representative of *pied-noir* interests and a source of resistance to the political process of decolonization. Although the town features political conditions particularly suited to revisionist commemoration, Perpignan is one location among many in recent years to have commissioned memorials to the OAS. As Ruscio states in his study of this group and the recent efforts to rehabilitate its legacy, ‘on comptait, fin 2013, quelque soixante-dix lieux de mémoire de cette nature’ across France, with a majority concentrated in the Midi.<sup>388</sup> Such memorial sites, furthermore, are developed with the intention not only to normalize the OAS as a subject of commemoration, but also to align their legacy of violence and opposition to the post-colonial Republic with broader themes of *pied-noir* memory and victimization. This has a clear effect of continued polarization of questions of colonial memory. While the memorial to the OAS represents, for Hillel, a ‘caricature extrême’ of the efforts across the Midi in recent years to rehabilitate legacies of France’s colonial past in Algeria, it also forms a significant part of the specific historical revisionism and unilateral vision of the past presented repeatedly in Perpignan.<sup>389</sup> The pursuit of selective and partial forms of commemoration launched with the OAS stele was continued with inauguration in 2007 of the *Mémorial des disparus*. Its main focus on the European settler population of Algeria includes, most significantly, civilian victims of violence in the months after the ceasefire of March 1962.<sup>390</sup> This represents a further advance for memorialization of the rejection of the process of decolonization and is located on the same site later occupied by the CDDFA. While ostensibly dedicated to a civilian population, the list of names on the

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<sup>387</sup> Hillel, *La triade nostalgérique*, p. 25.

<sup>388</sup> Alain Ruscio, *Nostalgie*, p. 10.

<sup>389</sup> Hillel, *La triade nostalgérique*, p. 15.

<sup>390</sup> Boris Thioly, ‘Perpignan: le mémorial de la discorde’, *L’Express*, 23 November 2007, <[http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/perpignan-le-memorial-de-la-discorde\\_468181.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/perpignan-le-memorial-de-la-discorde_468181.html)> [accessed 10 August 2015].

memorial, as Hillel finds, also features members of the OAS, with some of those listed as civilian victims also found on the previous monument.<sup>391</sup> There is, therefore, a significant blurring of categories, yet Algerian victims and other constituencies of memory are at all times absent from this memorial landscape developed in Perpignan.

The development of physical sites of memory and monuments that would establish definitive representation of a nostalgic and partial historical narrative has consistently been a major pursuit of *pied-noir* memory activism. In the absence of physical monuments in the years after 1962, as Eldridge traces, ‘the *pied-noir* community has had to rely on *rassemblements*, both local and national for the opportunity to evoke collectively these recollections and thus re-create the essence of *la-bas*’.<sup>392</sup> The successful development of memorial sites in Perpignan, however, represents an advance to the extent that it enables the anchoring of claims to collective memory in physical space. While funding for the renovation of the site was provided by municipal authorities, the *Cercle algérieniste* financed the installation of both the *Mémorial des disparus* and the CDDFA.<sup>393</sup> As demonstrated in the selective form of memory transmitted by these sites, this organization proclaims its self-appointed mission ‘sauvegarder et promouvoir la culture des Français d’Algérie’.<sup>394</sup> A particularly strong influence is enjoyed in Perpignan by the *Cercle algérieniste*, where the former president of the local branch, Suzy Simon-Nicaise, is also an elected councillor and member of the *conseil municipal*.<sup>395</sup> At every stage in the planning and development process, the interests of this organization were given an exclusive position. Further to the nostalgia for life in colonial Algeria represented in the displays of the CDDFA, an argument for the economic and material development

<sup>391</sup> Hillel, *La triade nostalgique*, p. 75.

<sup>392</sup> Claire Eldridge, “Le symbole de l’Afrique perdue”: Carnoux-en-Provence and the *pied-noir* Community’, in *France’s Lost Empires: Fragmentation, Nostalgia and la fracture coloniale*, ed. by Kate Marsh and Nicola Frith (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), pp. 125–36 (p. 126).

<sup>393</sup> Hillel, *La triade nostalgique*, p. 70.

<sup>394</sup> *Cercle algérieniste* <<http://www.cerclealgerianiste.fr/index.php/le-cercle-algerianiste>> [accessed 20 July 2015].

<sup>395</sup> Hillel, *La triade nostalgique*, p. 16.

provided by colonial rule is deployed to justify the exclusive focus of the centre on the settler population. Claims for the civilizing mission and material contributions of French colonialism are made repeatedly in an effort to rehabilitate and relativize legacies of the presence in Algeria of this settler population. As Ali Yedes argues in his study of *pied-noir* memory discourses and the exclusive position sought by activist groups, ‘it was the Algeria that bore *their* impact that mattered’.<sup>396</sup> Equally, emphasis has been placed in museological representations of colonial Algeria on the contribution of a settler population in order to expose a contrast with experiences in France since 1962.

The succession of memorial sites in Perpignan that make the town a centre for revisionist claims has raised awareness of the exclusive treatment of colonial nostalgia at the expense of all other perspectives and constituencies of memory. The close attention paid by the present study to the processes for the commissioning and planning of both the *Mémorial des disparus* and the CDDFA carried out by the town’s *conseil municipal* provides further, specific evidence of how the ‘nourishing’ of revisionist attitudes has been carried out. Funding from municipal and regional sources for the restoration of both the interior section of the building to house the CDDFA and the site for the *Mémorial des disparus* (at a total cost of €1.6 million) were initially approved at a meeting of the *conseil municipal* in July 2006.<sup>397</sup> The dossier for the restoration of the site was presented and led by Pujol throughout the planning process. A further stage of plans was approved in October 2006, with preparation for the *Mémorial des disparus* established alongside the approval of public funding for the restoration of the gallery space for the

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<sup>396</sup> Ali Yedes, ‘Social Dynamics in Colonial Algeria: The Question of *pieds-noirs* identity’, in *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*, ed. by Tyler Stovall and Georges Van den Abbeele (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), pp. 235–49 (p. 243).

<sup>397</sup> Conseil Municipal de Perpignan : Séance Publique du Conseil Municipal, 10 Juillet 2006  
 <<http://www.mairie-perpignan.fr/sites/mairie-perpignan.fr/files/documents/cr-2006-07-10.pdf>> Item no. 32, pp. 29-30 [accessed 10 August 2015.]

CDDFA.<sup>398</sup> The approval given consistently by the *conseil municipal* to these forms of commemoration, with no provision for a balancing of approaches or engagement with other constituencies, had the effect of transforming partisan claims to memory into official history. While it was developed successfully through this close partnership of political and memorial interests, the project for the restoration and funding of the site housing the *Mémorial des disparus* and the CDDFA also motivated the formation of a broad coalition of opposition groups in Perpignan. This included, significantly, as Hillel recounts in the collective's formation, *pieds-noirs* motivated to contest the claim by the *Cercle algérieniste* to a monopoly on representation of their collective memory and demonstrating the significant heterogeneity of the population repatriated from Algeria.<sup>399</sup> Following the successful development of these memorial sites and the rooting of colonial nostalgia that they enable, this collective – *Pour une histoire franco-algérienne non falsifiée* – has remained active and engaged in opposition to continued revisionist commemorations, in particular those centred on the OAS stele.<sup>400</sup>

In addition to the favour accorded to *pied-noir* memory activism by the *conseil municipal* that enabled the installation of the *Mémorial des disparus*, the development of the CDDFA up to its opening in 2012 represented a further strengthening of connections between municipal authorities in Perpignan and the *Cercle algérieniste*. As a museum incorporated into the town's cultural institutions, the CDDFA was presented in the document approved by the *conseil municipal* as 'un centre dédié au patrimoine des Français d'Algérie,

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<sup>398</sup> Conseil Municipal de Perpignan : Séance Publique du Conseil Municipal, 23 Octobre 2006 <<http://www.mairie-perpignan.fr/sites/mairie-perpignan.fr/files/documents/cr-2006-10-23.pdf>>, Item 6, pp. 9-11 [accessed 10 August 2015].

<sup>399</sup> Hillel, *La triade nostalgique*, p. 117.

<sup>400</sup> Frédérique Michalak, 'RDV du 7 juin manqué à Perpignan : La "stèle de l'OAS" désertée par les nostalgiques de l'Algérie française', *L'Indépendant*, 8 June 2015, <<http://www.lindependant.fr/2015/06/08/pas-d-hommage-aux-fusilles-de-l-algerie-francaise,2041400.php>> [accessed 10 August 2015].

dévolu au maintien de cette mémoire particulière'.<sup>401</sup> In particular, one significant clause in this partnership, approved as part of the planning process, was the division of responsibilities that gave the *Cercle algérieniste* full control over museological content.<sup>402</sup> The archival records and displays of the CDDFA demonstrate a highly selective use of historical evidence and the manipulation of figures. As well as valorizing the colonial period in Algeria, this is a practice intended to substantiate claims to a victim status for former settlers and argues for the responsibility of the metropolitan centre to compensate for their losses. This selective historical vision has also been aided by the consistently influential and prominent position enjoyed in Perpignan by the local branch of the *Cercle algérieniste* as it worked with the *conseil municipal* as a privileged actor in the transmission of collective memory: 'La création du centre de documentation des français d'Algérie répond donc aux objectifs croisés de la ville de Perpignan et du Cercle algérieniste, tant au niveau national que local.'<sup>403</sup> While commissioned and developed, furthermore, through funding at a local level, the CDDFA has taken on the role of a national memorial for a *pied-noir* lobby. It was inaugurated in January 2012 as the centrepiece of a national conference of the *Cercle algérieniste* and serves as a focal point for the organization's declared mission to preserve *pied-noir* identity against perceived outside threats.<sup>404</sup>

Although the proposals for the memorial sites in Perpignan and their support from the *mairie* were approved by a majority in the *conseil municipal* throughout the planning process, a political division is identifiable in the opposition votes cast by elected

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<sup>401</sup> Conseil Municipal de Perpignan : Séance Publique du Conseil Municipal, 16 Septembre 2010 <<http://www.mairie-perpignan.fr/sites/mairie-perpignan.fr/files/documents/cr-2010-09-16.pdf>>, Item 6, pp. 12–13 [accessed 10 August 2015].

<sup>402</sup> Conseil Municipal de Perpignan : Séance Publique du Conseil Municipal, 16 Septembre 2010 <<http://www.mairie-perpignan.fr/sites/mairie-perpignan.fr/files/documents/cr-2010-09-16.pdf>>, Item 6, pp. 12–13 [accessed 10 August 2015].

<sup>403</sup> Conseil Municipal de Perpignan : Séance Publique du Conseil Municipal, 16 Septembre 2010 <<http://www.mairie-perpignan.fr/sites/mairie-perpignan.fr/files/documents/cr-2010-09-16.pdf>>, Item 6, pp. 12–13 [accessed 10 August 2015].

<sup>404</sup> Hillel, *La triade nostalgique*, p. 168.

members of parties of the left.<sup>405</sup> Engagement with colonial memory and its inscription in public space at a local level has therefore reflected political calculations to manage interest groups as electoral constituencies. While both Béziers and Perpignan are run by right-wing administrations with large majorities, however, commitment to policies supporting colonial nostalgia and specific *pied-noir* interests are not the exclusive preserve of the political right in the Midi. In Montpellier, for example, a local system of political clientelism saw the long-serving Socialist administration favour the claims pursued by memory activists and invest repeatedly in memorialization focused on a large *pied-noir* population.<sup>406</sup> In Perpignan, as Hillel notes, local opposition to the processes by which colonial nostalgia was ‘nourished’ developed with the notable absence of the Parti Socialiste.<sup>407</sup> The electoral value attached to the influence of an assumed *pied-noir* bloc has therefore remained significant across these locations. The recurrence of the political instrumentalization of colonial memory and the influence enjoyed by narrow interests of nostalgia over policies governing the inscription of collective memory into public space stems from the lack of a broader framework in which contrasting perspectives can circulate. From a well-established and prominent position, claims of *pied-noir* grievance and colonial nostalgia thrive on a situation of competition for recognition.

As demonstrations of the dominance of revisionist attitudes that persist due to political influence in localized strongholds of colonial nostalgia, these sites in Béziers and Perpignan motivate further reflection on alternative forms for the effective inscription into public space of a plural, collective memory. Through their status as forms of memorialization motivated by a specific intention to preserve *pied-noir* interests, these sites also correspond to the compensatory value of ‘lieux de mémoire’ identified by

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<sup>405</sup> See *Séance Publique du Conseil Municipal* of 23/10/06 & 16/9/10.

<sup>406</sup> On Montpellier, see Emile Chabal, ‘Le Président? Georges Frêche and the Making of a Local Notable in Late Twentieth-Century France’, in *Place and Locality in Modern France*, ed. by Philip Whalen and Patrick Young (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 204–17.

<sup>407</sup> Hillel, *La triade nostalgique*, p. 38.

Pierre Nora: 'les lieux où se cristallise et se réfugie la mémoire.'<sup>408</sup> The effect of the concentration of partial claims imposed at this local level by the accumulation of a series of memorials appealing to nostalgic attitudes clearly has the consequence of making further engagements with the colonial past and a de-fusing of tensions problematic. The significant rooting of memory in relation to factors of space and the investments in commemorative forms that reinforce specific grievances observed in both of these cases demonstrate the difficulties imposed by the fragmented state of a memorial landscape in France to the development of a broader, coherent form that would enable dialogue between constituencies. As Ruscio argues, in spite of the passage of time since Algerian independence, 'la décolonisation des esprits s'est révélée bien plus longue à se mettre en place que celle des territoires'.<sup>409</sup> In this context, the functions of transmission and mediation of collective memory performed by physical sites is of consistent critical interest. As an introduction to analysis of the selected recent literary texts which present valuable original approaches to representing *pied-noir* perspectives in a contemporary plural framework, the study of a further recent case of contested memorialization, located in Aix-en-Provence, will enable consideration of the recurrent disputes over the mediation of colonial memory and the potential alternative directions to be elaborated. In response to the fractures that have been reinforced by the succession of memorial sites in Perpignan, Savarèse proposes conditions for an effective plural approach towards engagement with the Algerian past in public and museological space in France. For Savarèse, the contentious memorial interests pursued in sites such as the CDDFA 'impliquent donc de choisir un vocabulaire destiné à couper la production d'un récit sur l'Algérie de significations partielles et partiales, qui ne rendent compte que des points de

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<sup>408</sup> Nora, 'Entre Mémoire et Histoire, la problématique des lieux', p. xvii.

<sup>409</sup> Ruscio, *Nostalgie*, p. 231.

vue d'acteurs "spécifiques" au détriment d'une histoire complexe'.<sup>410</sup> In the context of the present chapter, and the specific focus on the renewed critical perspectives that are provided by recent literary works, attention to the means of representation employed to disrupt persistently divisive mentalities is significant.

### **Aix-en-Provence: contested memory and representation**

The above discussion of recent practices of commemoration in Béziers and Perpignan highlighted the ways in which the interests pursued by political lobby groups have been supported by the policies of municipal authorities. These interventions demonstrate how, in addition to the production of the 'ego-histoire' of a *pied-noir* community in France, the pursuit of exclusive self-representation results in attachments to what Savarèse terms 'une mémoire contre l'histoire'.<sup>411</sup> Furthermore, the intention in these locations to fix a partial account as a definitive representation of colonial memory is an indication of the persistence of politicized myths identified at the outset of the present chapter. In Béziers, Ménard's appeal to the violent legacy of the OAS was framed by his account of a threat in the present to a *pied-noir* community identity. Equally, a factor in the engagement by municipal authorities in Perpignan in a partnership with the *Cercle algérieniste* was the refusal to recognize alternative constituencies of memory in museological forms. In a manner consistent with the political dynamics and dividing lines identified in these locations, another recent initiative for commemoration, in this instance in Aix-en-Provence, presents a further significant case study for the present chapter. In particular, the collision in this location between proposals for a renewed interpretation of collective memory involving reference to literature, and local efforts to limit engagement with the colonial past to representation solely through a nostalgic lens, has implications for

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<sup>410</sup> Éric Savarèse, 'En finir avec les guerres de mémoires algériennes en France', in *L'Algérie dépassionnée: Au-delà du tumulte des mémoires*, ed. by Éric Savarèse (Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 2008), pp. 175–99 (p. 180).

<sup>411</sup> Savarèse, *L'invention des pieds-noirs*, p. 132.



broader historical contextualization and the position of former settler memory in a plural framework. As a town in the Midi home to a large population of former settlers repatriated from Algeria, and where attitudes of colonial nostalgia are nourished with particular enthusiasm, Aix-en-Provence bears similarities to Béziers and Perpignan in its status as an enclave of reactionary politics. In particular, the presence in the town of the *Centre de documentation historique sur l'Algérie* is identified by Lorcín as an example, alongside the recent museological projects of the *Cercle algérieniste* in Perpignan, of the successful institutionalization of a historical counter-narrative.<sup>412</sup> A repertoire of revisionist commemorations and appeals to grievances concerning decolonization of the sort seen in Béziers has also been employed by municipal authorities. Proposals were made in 2008, for example, for the naming of a street in honour of Jean Bastien-Thiry, the former military officer and OAS leader executed for his role in an assassination attempt on De Gaulle in August 1962.<sup>413</sup> The commemoration, in this way, of Bastien-Thiry as a martyr for a desperate last action against decolonization is a further example of strong attachment to the narrative of victimization at the hands of the Republic.<sup>414</sup>

The specific episode of disputed commemoration in Aix-en-Provence concerned the proposals for an exhibition in 2013 to mark the centenary of the birth of Albert Camus. The exhibition was initially planned with the historian Benjamin Stora in the role of curator, and was to present an approach to the pre-eminent writer of French Algeria as a reference point for a collective history of both former colonial territory and metropolitan centre. While drawing on the totality of Camus's literary and philosophical *œuvre* in evaluating his universal appeal, this exhibition proposed, significantly, to situate the writer's works in their historical and political context and to trace the lasting influence of

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<sup>412</sup> Lorcín, 'France's Nostalgias for Empire', p. 164. See also *Centre de documentation historique sur l'Algérie*, <<http://www.cdha.fr/>> [accessed 20 July 2015].

<sup>413</sup> Michel Felin, 'Une rue Bastien Thiry?', *L'Express*, 21 May 2008, <[http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/indiscret/une-rue-bastien-thiry\\_502714.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/indiscret/une-rue-bastien-thiry_502714.html)> [accessed 2 November 2015].

<sup>414</sup> J. G. Shields, *The Extreme Right in France: From Pétain to Le Pen* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 107.

formative environments in colonial Algeria.<sup>415</sup> In contrast to the recent initiatives in Béziers and Perpignan that were the products of local authorities acting in concert with memory activist groups, the plans for the exhibition in Aix-en-Provence arose from a broader cultural programme with funding at a national level.<sup>416</sup> The project met local opposition, however, as the combination of subject-matter and curator were deemed incompatible with the dominant and deep-rooted existing memorial interests in the town. The development of the project indeed proved problematic from the outset due to the stance led by the town's mayor, Maryse Joissans (Les Républicains, formerly UMP).<sup>417</sup> In contrast to Ménard and Pujol in Béziers and Perpignan respectively, Joissans is not herself a *pied-noir*. Her engagement with a community memory and recognition of its alignment with electoral interests nonetheless demonstrates the consistency of connections involved in the privileging of attitudes of colonial nostalgia. As the proponent of a plural approach to a collective memory of colonial Algeria outlined at the outset of the present chapter, Stora's arguments for mediation between constituencies of memory has regularly provoked defensive reactions from those with interests in sustaining nostalgic accounts. In his inauguration of the renamed street in Béziers in 2015, for example, Ménard also singled out Stora as his opponent, as he emphasized a claim to singular representation of colonial memory: 'L'Algérie de notre enfance, l'Algérie de nos aïeux, notre Algérie, ce n'est pas ce que certains veulent nous faire croire, ce n'est pas ce qu'un Benjamin Stora ne cesse d'écrire.'<sup>418</sup> The pursuit of this colonial nostalgia through commemoration motivates the closing-off of all alternative

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<sup>415</sup> Benjamin Stora and Jean-Baptiste Périé, *Camus Brûlant* (Paris: Stock, 2013), p. 14.

<sup>416</sup> The exhibition was to form part of the programme of events for Marseille-Provence European Capital of Culture 2013. See Jonathan Bouchet-Petersen, 'Albert Camus: L'Homme disputé', *Libération*, 13 August 2012, <[http://www.liberation.fr/culture/2012/08/13/albert-camus-l-homme-dispute\\_839642](http://www.liberation.fr/culture/2012/08/13/albert-camus-l-homme-dispute_839642)> [accessed 8 October 2015].

<sup>417</sup> Catherine Simon, 'Albert Camus, un écrivain pris en otage à Aix-en-Provence', *Le Monde*, 14 September 2012, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2012/09/14/albert-camus-un-ecrivain-pris-en-otage-a-aix-en-provence\\_1760451\\_3260.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2012/09/14/albert-camus-un-ecrivain-pris-en-otage-a-aix-en-provence_1760451_3260.html)> [accessed 13 October 2015].

<sup>418</sup> Ménard, 'Discours de l'inauguration de la rue Commandant Denoix de Saint Marc'

connections to the past. Above all, the status of Aix-en-Provence as a stronghold of revisionist commemoration made the proposal for dialogue and critical reflection in Stora's planned exhibition a source of conflict.

In spite of the initial investment and support for the exhibition from national government, local concentrations of political interest prevailed in this case, as the tensions raised by the original plans resulted in the removal of Stora and cancellation of the project in early 2012.<sup>419</sup> The failure to achieve consensus in Aix-en-Provence highlighted, again, the uneven nature of a postcolonial memorial landscape in France and the obstacles to the development of substantial reference points for a plural memory imposed by prevailing political fractures. Indeed, faced with local opposition, this situation of division was reinforced by the response of the removal of ministerial funding and support for the exhibition.<sup>420</sup> While these political disputes were played out on the ostensible grounds of administration and organization, the opposition in Aix-en-Provence to the role of Stora also reflected particular interests in the instrumentalization of Camus as an aspect of the nostalgic commemoration of the lost former colonial territory. In his account of his role in the exhibition project, Stora identifies the common interests of *pied-noir* memory activists in locations including Aix-en-Provence to co-opt Camus as a legitimate cultural reference and expand the political influence that they enjoy: 'dans ces milieux de la "nostalgérie" on aime à s'appropriier Albert Camus, on le présente, de manière simplificatrice, sous les traits d'un pied-noir pro-Algérie française.'<sup>421</sup> The primary effect of such appropriation of references and selective commemoration is the perpetuation of a diffuse and fractured quality of colonial memory. Where strongly concentrated nostalgic interests hold sway, furthermore, they

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<sup>419</sup> Stora and Péretié, *Camus Brûlant*, p. 23.

<sup>420</sup> 'Exposition Camus à Aix: Mme Filippetti "regrette" l'absence de Benjamin Stora', *Le Point*, 23 August 2012, <[http://www.lepoint.fr/culture/exposition-camus-a-aix-mme-filippetti-regrette-l-absence-de-benjamin-stora-23-08-2012-1498548\\_3.php](http://www.lepoint.fr/culture/exposition-camus-a-aix-mme-filippetti-regrette-l-absence-de-benjamin-stora-23-08-2012-1498548_3.php)> [accessed 8 October 2015].

<sup>421</sup> Stora and Péretié, *Camus Brûlant*, p. 26.

equally pursue the disruption of alternative approaches that would encourage plurality. After the rejection of Stora and the abandonment of the original project on Camus, a revised version was developed in Aix-en-Provence and opened in 2013.<sup>422</sup> As Jeremy Harding notes, the commemoration of Camus that eventually took place served primarily to expose the continued lack of consensus surrounding colonial memory and the value of the writer's intellectual legacy in France: 'A half-hearted, under-funded exhibition – a perfect expression of the national attitude to Camus – went ahead in Aix, bankrolled mostly by the mayor's tax-base.'<sup>423</sup> Having been directed in line with the interests of municipal authorities – and thus with contentious aspects of colonial legacies evacuated – the alternative exhibition was deemed more acceptable to its location.

### **Literary narratives and the mediation of colonial memory**

In assessing themes of *pied-noir* memory and the conditions surrounding its continually problematic incorporation into collective approaches to the legacies of decolonization in France, the present chapter has so far considered recent practices of memorialization that promote and perpetuate divisive attitudes of colonial nostalgia. This has involved a focus on the proliferation of physical memorials in locations in the south of France that are home to large populations of former settlers. The critical significance of these memorial projects lies, above all, in their effects of reifying the fractures provoked by the political and social afterlives in France of colonialism in Algeria. Continued divisions between constituencies of colonial memory are notably exacerbated by localized political advocacy and competing claims for recognition that draw, in turn, on problematic engagements at a national level with collective memory and the active traces of an Algerian past. The prevalence of such tensions is also identifiable as a product of

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<sup>422</sup> 'Cité du livre d'Aix-en-Provence: 2013 Centenaire de la naissance d'Albert Camus' <<http://www.citedulivreiaix.com/Typo3/fileadmin/documents/Expositions/centrecamus/exposition-citoyen.htm>> [accessed 8 October 2015].

<sup>423</sup> Jeremy Harding, 'The Castaway', *London Review of Books*, 36: 23 (2014), 11–15.

persistent nostalgia for the former colonial system and the hegemonic position occupied by settlers. As an emotion generated by awareness of loss and definitive historical change, nostalgia motivates efforts at preservation of traces of the past, even when faced with the impossibility of their recovery. As the historian Peter Fritzsche suggests, expressions of this emotion reflect anxiety over the passage of time and the definitive closure of the past as it 'constitutes what it cannot possess and defines itself by its inability to approach its subject, a paradox that is the essence of nostalgia's melancholia'.<sup>424</sup> For *pied-noir* collective memory, decolonization in 1962 is identifiable as an episode of the redrawing of boundaries that provoked reactions and attachment to stability in an idealized past. In the particular contemporary cases of memorialization in Béziers and Perpignan, recent memorialization has served to reaffirm political grievances and crystallize reactionary attitudes. Beyond a residual form of longing for a lost home among those affected directly by decolonization, therefore, a form of nostalgia in the present that is mobilized specifically in defence of colonialism and an exclusive *pied-noir* position drives opposition to developments in contemporary society, comprising a plurality of positions on collective memory. In the case of Aix-en-Provence, the political conflict that arose demonstrated the particularly strong influence enjoyed by local memory activist groups. Their opposition to the proposed curation of a project on French-Algerian connections, furthermore, motivates reflection on the specific role that can be performed by literary texts in calling into question the continued divisions between constituencies of colonial memory.

The general categorization established by Fritzsche is instructive for its outline of the conditions by which nostalgia is generated and can persist. The observation in the present chapter of the significance of longing for former territory in Algeria among *pied-*

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<sup>424</sup> Peter Fritzsche, 'Specters of History: On Nostalgia, Exile and Modernity', *American Historical Review*, 106:5 (2001), 1587–1618 (p. 1595).

*noir* perspectives in France, however, also highlights the importance of critical attention to the ways in which spatial reference is employed in efforts to preserve and valorize aspects of the colonial past. In his reflection on the controversy generated in Aix-en-Provence and the continually problematic intellectual and cultural legacy of Camus that it exposed, Stora argues for the value of his approach to the writer that aimed, in contrast to selective nostalgic appropriation, both to salvage literary merit and to promote a renewed approach to a reconciliatory and fully collective memory that could be shared between contemporary France and Algeria. Although identified closely with a specific period and political atmosphere surrounding a settler population, Camus is nonetheless assigned by Stora the valuable status of ‘un écrivain et un homme entre deux rives’, whose mobility informed qualities of self-reflection and wariness of polarities.<sup>425</sup> This insight is championed by Stora, in particular, in relation to Camus’ final and posthumously published novel *Le premier homme*.<sup>426</sup> In this text, written at the height of the Algerian War and unfinished at the time of his death in 1960, Camus portrays the experiences of settler population and their connections to territory.<sup>427</sup> While themes that would come to typify nostalgic reactions against decolonization are identifiable in the novel, its value as Camus’s ‘plus grand œuvre’ – as proposed by Stora – also comes from the profile that it provides of colonial social relations.<sup>428</sup> As an indicator of attachments to geographical place and the negotiation of a crisis of belonging for a settler population that was faced with the definitive loss of territory, furthermore, the text has attracted

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<sup>425</sup> Stora and Péretié, *Camus Brûlant*, p. 106.

<sup>426</sup> Albert Camus, *Le premier homme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994)

<sup>427</sup> *Le premier homme* has attracted particular critical attention for its value as a reflection of the period of the portrayal of crises from the perspective of a settler population. For John Strachan, the text reveals *pied-noir* relations with metropolitan France across the duration of colonial rule, as well as a test of colonial mentalities and attachments to myths of belonging and identity. See: John Strachan ‘Between History, Memory and Mythology: The Algerian Education of Albert Camus’, in *France’s Lost Empires: Fragmentation, Nostalgia and la fracture coloniale*, ed. by Kate Marsh and Nicola Frith (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), pp. 55–67. Camus’s interests in reform and moderation of the colonial system have also been examined by David Carroll, who reads the author’s works in relation to upbringing and background in Algeria. See: David Carroll, *Albert Camus, the Algerian: Colonialism, Terrorism, Justice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

<sup>428</sup> Stora and Péretié, *Camus Brûlant*, p. 70.

critical attention for its effort to establish an independent and reflective position.<sup>429</sup>

Debra Kelly notably emphasises the significance of the novel's combination of personal and collective histories, as well as its reflection on a plurality of perspectives beyond solely those of the settler population, in presenting 'a mediating text within the contradictions and ambiguities which constitute the postcolonial world'.<sup>430</sup> The literary form is thus valuable for its role in aiding the mediation of memory. In particular, the demonstration of the nuances and complexities of experiences can challenge the prevalence of nostalgic themes surrounding the memory of former settlers. The literary analysis that the present chapter carries out is focused on more recent texts and considers means of engagement with contemporary contexts of *pied-noir* memory, as well as the mediation of persistent surrounding tensions. Attention to the quality of critical reflection that is provided by literary representation, however, remains significant and informs the analysis in the following section of the contemporary portrayals of *pied-noir* memory connected to physical space.

As demonstrated by the consistency of representations in recent physical sites of memory and, previously, in the turn to narrative form identified by Dine as compensatory and self-justificatory measures, the rooting of *pied-noir* memory in connections to former colonial territory is axiomatic. It is on this basis of reference to physical space, furthermore, that a critical reinterpretation of the conditions in which *pied-noir* claims to territory and an exceptional status persist can be carried out most effectively. The recent works by Roux and Plantagenet that engage with contemporary manifestations of *pied-noir* memory also interrogate these conditions. A survey of a range

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<sup>429</sup> The particular concern of Camus for connections to geographical place has been analysed recently by Claudia Esposito, for whom *Le premier homme* portrays a crisis of belonging and an attempt at resolution through identification with a trans-Mediterranean space. Although the narrative is subjective and based on Camus's personal experiences, Esposito argues that it '...tells the story of the existential predicament of a whole generation of pieds-noirs.' See Claudia Esposito, *The Narrative Mediterranean: Beyond France and the Maghreb* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), p. 27.

<sup>430</sup> Debra Kelly, 'Le premier homme and the literature of loss', in *The Cambridge Companion to Camus*, ed. by Edward J. Hughes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 191–202 (p. 196).

of critical frameworks of memory and nostalgia also informs the evaluation in the present study of ways in which conditions in France of anxiety over engagement with legacies of empire enable the specific expressions of longing for the colonial past and attachment to myths to thrive among *pieds-noirs*. In establishing her typology of ‘imperial’ and ‘colonial’ forms of nostalgia, Lorcin credits as her basis the working definition provided by Boym, for whom separation and distance are essential to this historical emotion. Boym’s definition builds, specifically, on what she identifies as the two constituent parts of nostalgia, its ‘restorative’ and ‘reflective’ dimensions: ‘Restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. Reflective nostalgia dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance.’<sup>431</sup> In relation to *pied-noir* memory in contemporary France, Lorcin’s definition of the specifically ‘colonial’ form of nostalgia – on which the present chapter focuses – bears a strong connection to Boym’s ‘restorative’ form in its concern for a reversal of events and direct return to the past.<sup>432</sup> Following the same model, nostalgia of the ‘imperial’ variety therefore corresponds to Boym’s ‘reflective’ category and involves a focus on past conditions. While relevant to an assessment of the variation in responses and nostalgic outlooks at individual levels, the further application of this model to collective memory of decolonization must not lead to value judgements on better or lesser forms of nostalgia but, rather, enable awareness of their inherently interconnected nature and relevance to continued tensions over active traces of the colonial past in contemporary France. In her recent study of *pied-noir* writing and representations of desired returns to Algeria, Hubbell argues that narratives composed after 1962 aided the construction of a stable position and led a ‘fight against forgetting’ in

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<sup>431</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p. 41.

<sup>432</sup> Lorcin, ‘France’s Nostalgias for Empire’, p. 144.



the face of uprooting from Algeria and exile in France.<sup>433</sup> The past that was preserved in such accounts, however, largely remained the product of the defensive mentalities and claims to an exceptional status constitutive of settler perspectives. It is in light of the influence of nostalgic accounts aimed at preserving fixed images of the Algerian past that the approaches to ongoing tensions of colonial memory in France pursued by contemporary authors – who reflect a generational shift and valuable distanced perspectives – present a significant reimagining of *pied-noir* accounts in a broadened, collective frame.

Here, analysis of the selected texts by Roux and Plantagenet also considers the ways in which the authors engage with a problematic inheritance of *pied-noir* memory. The narrators in both texts address the lasting implications of nostalgic longing that have continued to enclose *pied-noir* memory in ‘restorative’ claims to territory. Furthermore, as a medium in which critiques and proposals for alternative critical frameworks can be developed at length, literature is significant to the elaboration of broadened references for *pied-noir* memory and its intergenerational transmission. In the cases of Roux and Plantagenet, a notable sense of urgency underlines the efforts of the respective narrators to disassociate the *pied-noir* memory to which they are connected by familial ties from prominent nostalgic mentalities and persistent grievances. The independent actors of memory presented in these two texts attempt, through their varying forms, to de-fuse and surpass persistent tensions of colonial memory by emphasizing their detachment from the image of a community memory characterized by concerns for the preservation of interests and the perpetuation of claims to territory. As part of this concern for reframing, the continued alignment of *pied-noir* memory with a reactionary political agenda is a central target of the approaches adopted by authors to negotiate a politicized

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<sup>433</sup> Amy L. Hubbell, *Remembering French Algeria: Pieds-Noirs, Identity and Exile* (Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 2015), p. 21.

memorial impasse. Continued political disputes over engagement with details of the colonial past in France expose, above all, the conditions of debate and the divisions to be negotiated. The diagnosis in 2005, by Pascal Blanchard and others, of the French Republic's 'fracture coloniale' sought to highlight a political crisis of the recognition of legacies of empire.<sup>434</sup> Remediating this 'fracture' is a matter of presenting to the contemporary Republic the full implications of its colonial past and the plural nature of collective memory. The development of such postcolonial approaches has, most recently, been analysed usefully by Emile Chabal as critiques of the Republic that are concerned, primarily, with contesting monolithic notions of identity and belonging.<sup>435</sup> In the works by Roux and Plantagenet, an actively postcolonial form is identifiable in the authors' openness to alternative voices and critical contextualization of their perspectives, as they resist narrow categorization of forms of collective memory. Further to serving simply as a counterweight to memorial sites, therefore, literary texts have the value of setting new directions and reference points for collective remembrance.

The original strategies of remembrance and forms of literary representation that are developed by Roux and Plantagenet engage with the position of *pied-noir* memory in a contemporary political climate and the imbalanced memorial landscape surveyed above. Among recent literary texts dealing with contemporary manifestations of *pied-noir* memory, intervention in memory debates and critique of engagements at official levels in France with the colonial past has been of interest.<sup>436</sup> This engagement can be connected to recent forms of commemoration and the influence of memory activism, significant

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<sup>434</sup> Bancel, Blanchard, Lemaire, 'La fracture coloniale: une crise française', pp. 9–31.

<sup>435</sup> Emile Chabal, *A Divided Republic: Nation, State and Citizenship in Contemporary France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 198.

<sup>436</sup> This is the case, for example, in the novel *C'était notre terre* by Mathieu Belezi (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008). In this text, Belezi, an author with no personal connection to *pied-noir* memory, traces the consequences of decolonization through the portrayal of the experiences of a range of characters drawn from a wealthy family of landowning French colonial settlers in Algeria. On Belezi's portrayal of *pied-noir* reactions to decolonization and persistent divisions governing remembrance of the colonial past in France, see: Spiteri, 'Les Français d'Algérie cinquante ans après', p. 31.

factors in the context of efforts in recent years to valorize and rehabilitate aspects of France's colonial past and symptoms of what Ruscio terms 'l'ère de la restauration coloniale'.<sup>437</sup> For Roux and Plantagenet, working to update and reposition *pied-noir* memory most effectively from the basis of their personal connections requires an examination of the prevailing themes and representational tropes with which it is associated. As Dine outlined in his original assessment of settler narratives and the representation of myths of a pioneer status among this colonial population, the statement of a connection to territory was a primary means of asserting and reinforcing a dominant position in Algeria: 'The theme of creation *ex nihilo* is the real essence of the European claim to the land; indeed, it constitutes the most obviously self-justificatory aspect of the settlers' insistence on their development (*mise en valeur*) of the territory.'<sup>438</sup> In post-1962 accounts of exile and nostalgic longing in France, stability was sought in the face of uprooting. While, as Hubbell has posited, representations of former home and territory functioned as a form of compensation for loss, repetition of aspects of the past did not enable resolution or any settlement. The generational shift in perspective that is demonstrated in contemporary forms is therefore crucial in this regard, as the critical distance possessed by narrators in these texts enable nostalgic representations to be unpicked, and a broader range of attitudes portrayed. In her study of the *pied-noir* memory expressed in exile in France, the sociologist Clarisse Buono outlines how, in establishing an identity out of a desire for stability and in response to perceived threats, colonial settlers forged 'un mythe de naissance lié à son territoire'.<sup>439</sup> Such myths of belonging and claims to an exclusive position that have the intended effect of fixing representations and closing off connections to the colonial past – as demonstrated in recent physical sites of memory– are equally questioned in the texts by Roux and

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<sup>437</sup> Ruscio, *Nostalgie*, p. 241.

<sup>438</sup> Dine, *Images of the Algerian War*, p. 159.

<sup>439</sup> Buono, *Pieds-noirs de père en fils*, p. 28.

Plantagenet. Further to their critical contextualization that these texts carry out, attention to the insight into private perspectives and the conceptualization of alternative frames of reference for the transmission of *pied-noir* memory in the present is also significant.

The texts by Roux and Plantagenet, who were both born in France after 1962 to families resettled from Algeria, present significant processes of interrogating their origins and the implications in France of an inherited status and stereotyped images. For Buono, the issues surrounding inheritance and the transmission of memory that are encountered by the descendants of former settlers are exacerbated by the public profile in France of this collective memory. As both a form of postcolonial alterity and an obstacle to clear mediation of plurality, the associations of *pied-noir* memory with nostalgia impose a crisis of belonging: ‘quand la différence culturelle est empreinte de questionnements débattus à l’échelle nationale, quand les éléments qui la constituent sont trop négatifs pour qu’il soit possible de les revendiquer dans la sphère publique, comment faire?’<sup>440</sup> Such uncertainties over engaging with this past and attempts to transform conditions are identifiable in the works of Roux and Plantagenet. Analysis in the following section of the strategies of interpretation and remembrance employed by both authors therefore considers their respective efforts to establish clarity, as well as the challenges they pose to conditions of incomplete or unresolved memory within which nostalgia resides and thrives. The study of inheritance and the perception of an imposed identity can, furthermore, be connected to the concept of ‘postmemory’ posited by Marianne Hirsch as ‘a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience’.<sup>441</sup> While trauma of uprooting or exodus is not a direct experience for these narrators, awareness of its lasting and generalized effects is central to their efforts to establish clarity and the poetics of the recovery of memory that develop in the texts. In previous expressions of a

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<sup>440</sup> Buono, *Pieds-noirs de père en fils*, p. 139.

<sup>441</sup> Marianne Hirsch, ‘The Generation of Postmemory’, *Poetics Today*, 29:1 (2008), 103–28 (p. 145).

community memory and construction of recent physical memorial sites, nostalgic longing would appear to be the *sine qua non* of *pied-noir* remembrance and appeals to collective memory, with regret and bitterness at the loss of former territories inseparable from expressions of a collective identity. In their respective and varied works, by contrast, Roux and Plantagenet work towards eventually more productive directions, with awareness of the relative position of former settlers within a plural memory of Algeria. Plantagenet states her awareness of how the *pied-noir* experience and anxieties over a position in France have continued to influence her: ‘Même si, moi, je n’ai pas d’accent. Si je suis de la deuxième génération, celle qui n’est pas désignée.’<sup>442</sup> In contrast to accounts of ‘restorative’ nostalgia, her approach to her journey to Algeria with her father is intended to enable a definitive settlement with the colonial past and a degree of separation, at least on a private and individual level, from legacies of uprooting from Algeria. Her combination of physical mobility and self-reflection nonetheless points to a repositioning of *pied-noir* memory and grounds for productive contemporary encounters between constituencies of memory. As she includes aspects of memoir and autobiography, Roux also outlines the perspective that she formed in order to overcome the burden of an inherited memory and to interpret effectively her family past: ‘J’aspirais moi-même à une complète indépendance vis-à-vis de ce passé.’<sup>443</sup> The most effective way of establishing the independence that she seeks is, therefore, to engage directly with the lasting influences of this collective memory, and the effects that it can have on the individual.

### **Annelise Roux, *La solitude de la fleur blanche***

At the outset of *La solitude de la fleur blanche*, the narrator focuses on stating her position in relation to an inherited family memory and a *pied-noir* status that she feels to have been

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<sup>442</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 27.

<sup>443</sup> Annelise Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche* (Paris: Sabine Wespieser, 2009), p. 21.

imposed on her. As she was born to recently repatriated parents, her stated intention to achieve independence therefore requires understanding of both the conditions of flight from Algeria and the lasting implications of resettlement in France.<sup>444</sup> Conditions of resettlement and problematic identification with France – into which they nonetheless integrated – had a significant influence on her formative environments. The negotiation of inheritance and lasting tensions is carried out initially in a discussion of constructed, mental images of the Maghreb and past attachments that contrast starkly with contemporary realities. She surveys, for example, ‘des paysages que j’ignore et que je sais cependant connaître, des endroits où je n’ai jamais mis les pieds mais que je connais par cœur, puisqu’à n’en pas douter, ils sont en moi’.<sup>445</sup> A further factor in the narrator’s difficulties is the lack of choice possessed over this identity, as she describes how an inherited memory of Algeria circulates ‘dans mes veines presque à mon insu. Je ne m’en suis pas purgée’.<sup>446</sup> This strong spatial referent and awareness of separation equally reflects a central theme of the text, namely the narrator’s motivation to negotiate persistent anxiety over how she is perceived by others in France. Following the tone set by this opening outline of the individual’s connection to spatial reference, her account is introspective. As Augustin Barbara argues, through this style ‘Annelise Roux exprime le mal-être de ceux qui, nés de l’autre côté de la méditerranée, seront appelés des “pieds-noirs”’. Le conflit intérieur devient ici réceptacle du conflit extérieur entre la France et l’Algérie’.<sup>447</sup> Resolution to tensions must be achieved, therefore, by addressing their sources. While, in contrast to Plantagenet, Roux does not undertake an actual physical journey in an effort to overcome this sense of ‘mal-être’, both *pied-noir* daughters share

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<sup>444</sup> Thierry Clermont, ‘Une mémoire moribonde’, *Le Figaro*, 17 September 2009, <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/livres/2009/09/17/03005-20090917ARTFIG00400-une-memoire-moribonde.php>> [accessed 25 November 2015].

<sup>445</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, p. 9.

<sup>446</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, p. 10.

<sup>447</sup> Augustin Barbara, ‘Le roman et la mémoire difficile de la guerre d’Algérie: À propos de Laurent Mauvignier (*Des Hommes*) et d’Annelise Roux (*La Solitude de la fleur blanche*)’, *Esprit* (October 2010), 50–53 (p. 50).

identification of writing as the essential medium in which to assess the consequences of an inherited status and surroundings in France. A further stage of the reimagining required to elucidate her connections to this past — as proposed in Hirsch's notion of postmemory and inheritance — is identifiable in the relation that the narrator attempts to elaborate with members of elder generations, who were often silent regarding their experiences: 'Je n'ai entre les mains qu'une mémoire moribonde ou morte, souvent défigurée.'<sup>448</sup> She must revive this memory in a productive and positive manner, in contrast to restorative demands. Throughout the text, therefore, the narrator's lucid critical perspective, as well as her process of self-examination, drive her efforts to obtain both an effective sense of inheritance and a degree of separation from this past.

Roux works to put all of these formative experiences and influences in a clear context, starting with the prevailing image of the *pièdes-noirs* in France. As outlined by Sylvie Thénault, only a minority of the settler population in colonial Algeria were landowners inhabiting rural areas, and the average income and standard of living was lower than in the metropole.<sup>449</sup> Away from the self-constructed myths of a landowning pioneer class, furthermore, attachment to territory for a settler population was often primarily derived from concern for economic survival in the face of a precarious status. It is in this context that the narrator traces her ancestry and identifies a consistent anxiety over stability: 'La souche familiale était issue d'Alsace. Avant de creuser son trou dans les colonies, elle avait été tour à tour allemande et française.'<sup>450</sup> Successive generations are therefore found to have been subject to the course of historical events, with dispossession a consistent factor. As Evans explains: 'In the case of the settlers from Alsace, 100,000 hectares of the best land was given to them in 1871 in recognition of their patriotic decision to flee

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<sup>448</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, p. 13.

<sup>449</sup> Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, p. 32.

<sup>450</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, p. 18.

German rule after the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine.<sup>451</sup> Overall, the promise of reinvention and profit in Algeria was influential. Far from establishing any control beyond their own status with a colonial system, however, they would be dispossessed of this same territory in 1962. Equally, this historical perception of instability and precariousness is found to have led to mistrust of the metropolitan centre and motivated the adoption of defensive positions in France since 1962. For Roux's narrator, there is a continually difficult search for origins and positive self-definition in France, in the light of the conditions of their reception: 'Nous venions de nulle part, d'un trou noir mental appelé Algérie, étions louches, sans le sou, dénués de qualification particulière, des prolétaires ayant été sans le moindre égard jetés dehors de ce qu'ils considéraient être chez eux.'<sup>452</sup> The problematic issue of belonging and identification with territory therefore deepens the narrator's 'mal-être' and anxieties, with a recurring concern over polarization of matters of colonial memory. She seeks, in response, to situate herself in a broader context: 'À qui appartient-elle, la terre? Il fallait bien que la question empêchée tôt ou tard me traversât l'esprit.'<sup>453</sup> She finds, furthermore, that there was no room for nuance or explanation of their status, a situation that had an effect of enforcing her parents' frustrations.

Further to the anxiety over connections to territory and geographical reference, the narrator's self-reflection is informed by her acute awareness of the positions attached to the *pieds-noirs* in France of colonial nostalgia and attraction to reactionary politics. The problematic reception of this population in France, as highlighted by Jordi, exacerbated insular attitudes and sustained claims of injustice. The narrator herself addresses the inheritance of these aspects of a settler mentality, raising tension with her intentions stated at the outset to establish a degree of independence from the family past and the

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<sup>451</sup> Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War*, p. 24.

<sup>452</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, p. 92.

<sup>453</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, p. 78.



persistence of anxieties that surround the *pieds-noirs*: 'L'anti-gaullisme familial étant avéré, au passage je devais me débrouiller du lustre impeccable d'un de Gaulle s'étant opposé au maréchal Pétain....Je craignis longtemps des sympathies cachées, abominables, pour la collaboration.'<sup>454</sup> The implications of this inheritance are, therefore, her concerns over being positioned unfairly in political divisions. A sense of collective guilt also imposes what she identifies as the necessity of undoing these connections or, at least, suspicions of continued grievances. The narrator agrees with a consensus on the unjustifiable nature of the colonial system: 'Nous n'étions pas chez nous, nous n'avions qu'à partir.'<sup>455</sup> The clear and stable position that she seeks to negotiate for herself involves giving up all claims to inheritance and territory. Her practice of relating the conditions that have generated this *pied-noir* malaise in a broader historical and political context also recurs in her assessment of the untenable nature of colonial rule in Algeria and the rupture that she seeks from nostalgic or defensive counter-narratives: 'Je n'aspirais pas plus au maintien d'une Algérie française que d'un Congo belge, d'Indes britanniques, d'autres combinaisons rendues à l'état d'oxymores par la marche du temps, les générations neuves, le bon sens.'<sup>456</sup> Equally, generational distance affords her a critical perspective and motivates the effort to counteract assumed restorative demands.

The narrator's desire for stability involves examining all the root causes of her anxiety, an approach that calls into question the reception of settlers in France, as well as the self-contained myths of this population. An existential crisis, however, was also exacerbated by an unclear position or means for expression of origins in France. As Barbara observes regarding the consistency of this anxious and self-reflective tone: 'L'auteur fait un portrait vivant, toujours en mouvement, de cette identité fabriquée par le regard de

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<sup>454</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, p. 65.

<sup>455</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, p. 173.

<sup>456</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, pp. 79–80.

l'autre, celui qui est de l'autre côté.<sup>457</sup> A conflict of identity is, accordingly, all-encompassing, as the narrator remains frustrated in her search for acceptable origins. This uncertainty surrounding the lack of a clear means of expression was also a key aspect of her inheritance, as the narrator's upbringing was marked by a significant and unresolvable absence: 'Moi aussi je crevais de tristesse, prisonnière d'un indéfinissable manque, d'une colère tenace. Comment me détacher d'une terre pesante comme le sont les ancrés, de cette Algérie maudite, tant aimée, objet d'une dérobade mentale sans cesse revérifiée?'<sup>458</sup> The stereotype of the vindictive *pied-noir* is further deconstructed here in the reinterpretation of the specific conditions that produced the category of identity and limited a clear means of expression in France. This was particularly evident in the melancholy of her parents and the retreat into silence by the father: 'Mon père demeura longtemps la rage au cœur, moins par nostalgie de la chemise qu'il avait perdue dans les sables rêveurs des oueds que par la honte qu'il se voyait collée au front dans le regard des autres.'<sup>459</sup> Sensitivity to perception and status in France therefore recurs in line with the broader unresolved nature of connections to an Algerian past, and shapes the narrator's perspective.

Overall, the reflections carried out by Roux in pursuit of her stated aim of achieving independence from an inherited *pied-noir* identity points to further critical implications for the position and recognition of a repatriated former colonial population in France. As the narrator finds, the lasting effects of the experience of uprooting and resettlement are measurable primarily at their moments of resurgence years later. While former settlers have integrated into France with success, anxiety over a position in the metropole is shown to remain latent, and marks the inherited status that she seeks to negotiate: 'sous l'effet de la sidération, la douleur est différée, avait duré des décennies, durait

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<sup>457</sup> Barbara, 'Le roman et la mémoire difficile de la guerre d'Algérie', p. 52.

<sup>458</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, p. 101.

<sup>459</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, p. 94.

certainement toujours, sous la forme d'une peur et d'un enkystement obscurs.<sup>460</sup> The clarification of connections to an Algerian past - identified as being at the centre of her difficulties - is also pursued by Plantagenet in the account of a journey to Algeria made with her father. In her efforts to resolve a personal crisis, she explains how 'j'ai l'espoir que ce voyage en Algérie puisse être une révélation et me permette de voir plus clair dans ma vie'.<sup>461</sup> While the approach that she adopts is different from that of Roux in its method, Plantagenet shares in the overall identification of the necessity of writing to negotiate lasting tensions and achieve a settled perspective. The relation between the narrator and her father, in particular the way in which she leads the initiative for the journey in the face of his reluctance, is central to the renewed and independent connection that is established in the text. In her study of the transmission of memory within *pied-noir* families, Buono posits the significance of the process of interpretation enacted by a younger generation: 'Le travail de deuil est caractérisé par une crise identitaire nécessaire aux individus pour se libérer du poids d'une identité parentale intransmissible'.<sup>462</sup> The roles performed by the descendants of *pieds-noirs*, as demonstrated in the works of Roux and Plantagenet, can therefore provide a potential route beyond the crises provoked by fears over the disappearance of this memory in France and continued attachment to claims of an exceptional status. The original approaches and topographies of connections to an Algerian past that they trace, furthermore, are motivated by a renewed openness to the essential plural quality of collective memory. Following the introspective account and reflection on the lasting effects of an inherited *pied-noir* memory charted by Roux, the following section considers the text by Plantagenet and the approach that it pursues to resolving definitively a personal crisis of belonging.

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<sup>460</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, p. 21.

<sup>461</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 54.

<sup>462</sup> Buono, *Pieds-noirs de père en fils*, p. 144.

### Anne Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*

For Plantagenet, a process of achieving a clear and stable connection to this problematic past develops through the journey to Algeria that she undertakes with her father. A generational contrast in perspectives shapes the approach pursued in the text, but also informs the narrator's anxieties at the outset. In the very opening section, for example, at the airport prior to departure, Plantagenet attempts to negotiate uncertainties regarding the conditions of this return: 'je ramène mon père sur la terre où il est né et qu'il a quitté il y a un peu plus de quarante-quatre ans, terre désormais où il est étranger.'<sup>463</sup> While she emphasizes separation, awareness of a status as definitively foreign in Algeria is significant to the distance from lasting tensions and, furthermore, the ultimate aim of reconciliation that Plantagenet seeks to achieve. The passage of time that she evokes is equally important to the very possibility of undertaking a journey to Algeria, given the advances in security achieved since the end of the country's civil war of the 1990s. Plantagenet dates the journey precisely as taking place in 2005 and thus in a context of relative stability and ease of access to Algeria.<sup>464</sup> As Hubbell notes: 'The scene of Pieds-Noirs revisiting familiar places has become increasingly commonplace since the end of the Algerian civil war.'<sup>465</sup> It is in light of these conditions that Plantagenet is particularly sensitive to reception in Algeria. Her originality, however, lies in the way in which, through a physical journey, she puts into practice her intentions to examine prevalent themes of *pied-noir* nostalgia. While renewed connections have been made possible by this mobility and security, return journeys to Algeria are often organized by community groups and are thus connected to accounts of colonial and explicitly 'restorative' nostalgia. In stating her interest in reconciliatory encounters and a definitive settlement with this past, Plantagenet emphasizes her difference from such tourists motivated solely

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<sup>463</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 12.

<sup>464</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 19.

<sup>465</sup> Hubbell, *Remembering French Algeria*, p. 16.

by the rediscovery of former territories and reaffirmation of the objects of nostalgic longing: ‘ils appartiennent à des associations qui ont effectué toutes les démarches pour rendre possible, maintenant que le pays s’est un peu rouvert au monde, ce voyage “de retour” et entretiennent le chagrin.’<sup>466</sup> In this way, locations in Algeria would serve only as points on an extended itinerary of nostalgic commemoration and are connected to the memorials established in France in the vein of those discussed in the case studies in the first half of this chapter. In contrast to the nostalgic reinforcement of ‘chagrin’ and reopening of historical wounds that would result from simply revisiting former locations and attempting to resurrect the colonial past, Plantagenet intends to elucidate a previously unclear or under-expressed memory through the private and independent quality of her journey.

The narrator’s anxiety over the involvement of her father is particularly stark immediately prior to departure, as she is aware of having forced upon him this reconnection with the past through the prioritization of her own interests: ‘C’est un cadeau empoisonné que je lui fais, il était bien avec ses souvenirs, ne demandait rien à personne, en le ramenant de l’autre côté de la méditerranée je vais détruire toute une vie employée à ne pas raviver la douleur. Je vais réactiver le sentiment d’exil.’<sup>467</sup> While her father’s silence over life in Algeria has therefore long been a source of frustration, the narrator is equally aware of the stability provided by such closure. At the basis of Plantagenet’s motivation to undertake the journey and investigate her father’s family history lies a broader concern over inheritance and the intergenerational transmission of memory. In particular, the death of her grandmother – who was convinced of the impossibility of a return to Algeria – was a stimulus to her approach, not least for the awareness that it provoked of

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<sup>466</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 35.

<sup>467</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 16.

the possible disappearance of memory.<sup>468</sup> There is equally a significant contrast between the mobility and the distanced perspective possessed by the narrator and the closure of older generations that motivates her effort to act on their behalf to ensure the transmission of memory. While Algeria was often mentioned in family conversations, as Plantagenet also recounts in this section, it remained a largely repressed subject, particularly among her grandparents: ‘Ils disaient *là-bas, chez nous. A la ferme. L’Algérie, ça n’existait plus.*’<sup>469</sup> As a consequence of this silence and reluctance to engage with the past – a position continued with her father – the narrator has therefore only ever had access to fragments of this memory. Equally, Plantagenet stresses that this repression stemmed from a desire for a definitive separation from decolonization rather than bitterness or the pursuit of revenge through involvement in community organizations or any public profile of *pied-noir* identity: ‘Ils savaient très bien d’où ils venaient, ils l’assumaient avec plus ou moins de discrétion mais avaient aussi parfaitement conscience que l’histoire était terminée pour eux dans cette partie du monde, ils ne se faisaient aucune illusion... L’Algérie, ça ne sortait pas de la famille.’<sup>470</sup> The focus of remembrance on details of the former family home, furthermore, enabled a sense of stability over repetition of loss and uprooting. The narrator emphasizes this distance from the caricature of former settlers in political engagement, and finds that her father’s retreat into silence and reluctance to address this past was exacerbated by a polarization of positions in France with which he did not identify: ‘Mon père, c’est le contraire du pied-noir, des pieds-noirs tels qu’ils se sont présentés aux yeux des Français métropolitains et du reste du monde à partir de 1962... avec un sens de l’honneur et des valeurs réactionnaires.’<sup>471</sup> The return journey to Algeria and the form of the travelogue – interspersed with episodes of the narrator’s self-reflection – are intended, in this context,

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<sup>468</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 17.

<sup>469</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 18.

<sup>470</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 36.

<sup>471</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 31.

to enable a progressive gain in clarity regarding the family's past and eventual conditions for reconciliation by surpassing the conditions of nostalgia that reside in a sense of incompleteness.

In undertaking this physical journey, with the intention to achieve a definitive resolution of an unclear and persistently tense past, the original and most effective aspects of Plantagenet's approach are situated in her direct engagements with prevalent themes and subjects of *pied-noir* nostalgia. As Hubbell argues in her study of *pied-noir* narratives and the repetition of desired returns to Algeria, due to the deep-rooted nature of nostalgic accounts among those resettled in France, 'only uncovered latent memories or recent return voyages might disrupt unified vision of the past by bringing something truly different to the discourse on Algeria'.<sup>472</sup> An effective quality of disrupting nostalgic constructions is found in Plantagenet's practice of relating accounts of family memory to the present and repositioning the status of a former settler population in a broader context. While the narrator's concerns over their reception surround their departure, the arrival in Algeria has an immediate effect on the father, as the establishment of a renewed connection with physical place unlocks his willingness to engage with memories that were long expressed, but reluctantly. Almost immediately after landing in Oran, for example, he becomes an active participant and takes over the initiative from his daughter, due to the historical perspective that he possesses: 'Et là où je ne vois rien, mon père reconnaît la ville de son enfance'.<sup>473</sup> While Plantagenet demonstrates her awareness of how the rooting of *pied-noir* memory in reference to physical space has served to sustain partial, nostalgic accounts of Algeria in exile in France, this spatial dynamic is identified as a necessary basis for the productive encounters that she seeks in order to counteract nostalgic mentalities. Further to the immediate change in character of the narrator's

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<sup>472</sup> Hubbell, *Remembering French Algeria*, p. 74.

<sup>473</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 63.

father as a result of the stimulus of surroundings, recognition of the passage of time in these locations also enables *pied-noir* memory to be positioned as one layer among several in a plural history. The itinerary of locations that they visit relates to the two major sites of family memory, namely the former apartment in Oran and the farm in the nearby village of Misserghin. In both locations, significant encounters with the present inhabitants occur. The former apartment is visited almost immediately after their arrival, on the initial wave of enthusiasm brought about by the rediscovery of place: 'Il parle, mon père, n'a plus peur de parler, il est fatalement chamboulé de se retrouver propulsé là, tout doit se bousculer en lui, le souvenir des choses disparues et la certitude aiguë de leur disparition.'<sup>474</sup> After this positive arrival and initial visit, the narrator's concerns over the imposition on her father disappear, as the direct encounter proves to be a significant release and, furthermore, comes to vindicate her original initiative for the journey.

After the anxious departure and trepidation over the conditions in which they will be received, Plantagenet presents a progressive gain in understanding and confidence regarding engagement with prevalent traces of the colonial past. While this return to Algeria has a significant effect of breaking the father's silence on memories, however, his sudden gain in enthusiasm and the 'énergie inépuisable' provided by the stimulus of his surroundings are aided by the fact that the relevant locations visited are fully intact, and thus provide a clear basis for continuity between past and present.<sup>475</sup> A generational contrast in perspectives, equally, proves to be significant and complementary in this account. While, for example, the narrator makes use of a distanced perspective and ease of greater contextual understanding in order to frame her inheritance, her father 'doit se contenter depuis des décennies du peu qu'il a réussi à prendre avec lui à la hâte en janvier

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<sup>474</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 102.

<sup>475</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 107.



1961. On n'est pas égaux devant l'exil'.<sup>476</sup> In addition to the ease of travel that dispels the narrator's prior anxieties over reception, both father and daughter are struck by the accessibility of locations connected directly to family memory, as well as the visibility of traces of a French colonial past. At the location of the former family apartment in Oran, for example, they are surprised by the co-existence of French and Arabic street names on signs and the continued use by many of the French in preference over the Arabic: 'Qui ne connaîtrait pas l'histoire contemporaine de l'Algérie serait bien en peine d'affirmer laquelle est la plus récente.'<sup>477</sup> As part of Plantagenet's overall strategy for effective remembrance, her engagement with this palimpsestic quality of locations in the city is also important as a basis for the establishment of positive connections in the present, away from restorative claims. Beyond their primary focus on family memory and these specific locations, the narrator and her father also find general conditions in Oran to be propitious to contemporary reconciliation. Anxieties over reception and the place of *pied-noir* memory in contemporary Algeria are further eased by their guide, Amin, particularly due to his perspective on the continued presence of traces of this colonial past. In establishing dialogue, Plantagenet notes the advantage of Amin being of a similar age to her and equally distanced from the polarizing accounts of decolonization, as 'c'est une chance qui nous permettra d'éviter une asphyxie passéiste et d'accomplir plus légèrement une transition nécessaire vers l'Algérie d'aujourd'hui'.<sup>478</sup> Plantagenet attempts, furthermore, to establish a degree of equivalence with her own connection to colonial Algeria and that of Amin, while also expressing her surprise at the reference points shared by her father and this young Algerian. She observes Amin's familiarity with the street names of the colonial period and his ability to navigate according to her father's recollections of locations, despite having grown up in the post-independence era, when

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<sup>476</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 103.

<sup>477</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 82.

<sup>478</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 77.

inscriptions in the public space were officially re-written. She therefore notes the significance of a lasting collective memory that has survived the rupture of 1962: ‘En aucun cas il ne peut s’agir de ses propres souvenirs, on les lui a transmis. Il a reçu l’Algérie française en héritage, comme moi.’<sup>479</sup> The acknowledgement of a common inheritance and degree of continuity from the colonial past enables Plantagenet to draw further connections and to advance her approach to establishing a plural frame of reference for collective memory.

After this almost immediate transformation of her father and the initial meeting with the present inhabitants of the apartment, the visit to the other major site of family memory – the farm at Misserghin, on the outskirts of Oran– also provides further opportunity for positive exchanges in the present. While she possesses few tangible references to this site, she is strongly aware of its significance to successive generations, as it was evoked in France. The importance that Plantagenet attaches to the location, indeed, is heightened by the fact that she possesses so few material traces: ‘L’image que j’ai de Misserghin, contemplée des milliers de fois, c’est cette unique photo qui traîne dans ma famille depuis des décennies.’<sup>480</sup> As vectors of the transmission of memory, photographs have an important role in the process of interpretation carried out by the narrator, as her strategy of contemporary remembrance depends on working with the media that have also long served partial and restorative nostalgic interests. In her conceptualization of ‘postmemory’ as a mode of transmission, Hirsch also emphasizes how photographs perform a crucial function in enabling intergenerational connections and identification of traces of the past: ‘They are the leftovers, the fragmentary sources and building blocks, shot through with holes, of the work of postmemory.’<sup>481</sup> For Plantagenet and her father, images kept in the family provide the basis for their approach and can indeed serve as

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<sup>479</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 110.

<sup>480</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 121.

<sup>481</sup> Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, p. 23.

‘building blocks’ for contemporary reconciliation when they are put into renewed context by the return physical journey. In their study of visual representations of French-Algerian connections since 1962, Welch and McGonagle argue that the relation between memory and physical space in the medium of photography has been crucial in sustaining *pied-noir* nostalgia in France, most notably through photo-books: ‘By rendering past moments in object form, the photograph facilitates not simply a return to the past, but also, and perhaps more significantly, the *presence* of the past in the present.’<sup>482</sup> In addition to the photograph of the farmhouse to which she refers in preparing her visit to Misserghin, the artefacts that Plantagenet also possesses include aerial views and surveys of the estate. Aerial photographs have been particularly important, note Welch and McGonagle, to the development of a nostalgic perspective.<sup>483</sup> Where such images can therefore motivate the reassertion of the control of space inherent to colonial rule, the narrator attempts, in this case, to counteract such claims by updating a connection to this location in the present. In preparing for the journey to Algeria, she had also considered the approach to take, ‘dans l’hypothèse bouleversante où on retrouverait la ferme et rencontrerait ses nouveaux occupants’.<sup>484</sup> When they do encounter the present inhabitants, furthermore, the photographs form the basis of positive exchanges, as they are transformed from nostalgic souvenirs into documents of a shared history. The ability to exchange these traces of the past with the intention of reconciliation therefore also enables recognition of a degree of continuity between past and present: ‘Nous partons, ils restent. Ici, c’est chez eux maintenant. C’est peut-être pour cela que nous sommes venus, pour leur remettre symboliquement les clés, quarante-quatre ans après.’<sup>485</sup> As discourses on *pied-noir* memory have often been framed by the loss of home in Algeria and motivations for

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<sup>482</sup> Welch & McGonagle, *Contesting Views*, p. 24.

<sup>483</sup> Welch & McGonagle, *Contesting Views*, p. 30.

<sup>484</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 65.

<sup>485</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, p. 163.

recovery, this meeting is seen by the narrator as an opportunity for symbolic closure rather than reparation.

### **Conclusion: *Pied-noir* memory beyond nostalgia**

Overall, this chapter has assessed the persistent divisions that surround engagement with the Algerian colonial past in contemporary France and the significance to such disputes of the representation of a former colonial settler population. The specific tensions that govern *pied-noir* remembrance have been examined through the case studies of recent episodes of partial and revisionist commemoration that have developed with particular intensity at local levels. The evaluation of the specific role and critical value of literary texts in this context has therefore centred on the ways in which nostalgic attitudes have been encoded in representations of geographical space and, in response, the effective forms of disruption of colonial mentalities and re-formulation of frames of reference that are established by the writing of contemporary encounters. The influence over politics of memorialization and engagement with colonial legacies accorded to this community has also been a consistent factor governing the imbalanced nature of a memorial landscape identified in the present study. In a recent study of the progression since 1962 of what she terms ‘repatriation politics’, Sung-Eun Choi observes how, under successive French governments, ‘repatriation has evolved as a means to rewrite the Algerian past in collaboration with the repatriate communities’.<sup>486</sup> The close political connections and influence enjoyed by self-appointed representatives of a community memory, particularly those involved in memory activist groups and lobbying, has also led to the appropriation of settler experiences in commemoration, with the consequence of a homogenous portrayal of a population whose responses to exodus and exile were, in fact, greatly varied. By contrast, across the range of styles in the recent texts that this chapter has

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<sup>486</sup> Sung-Eun Choi, *Decolonization and the French of Algeria: Bringing the Settler Colony Home* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 10.

assessed as exemplars of the critique and reinterpretation of social and political afterlives of colonial Algeria, a progression in approaches to the mediation of *pied-noir* memory and its potential connection to an effective plural form is identifiable. The mobility possessed by representatives of a younger, French-born generation in the works by Roux and Plantagenet indicates a significant means with which to counter such fixed positions, as their texts result in the development of alternative and renewed spaces of reference for a positive sense of belonging in the present. For Plantagenet, the journey to Algeria and the effort to detach *pied-noir* memory from nostalgia is marked by the productive encounters and exchanges carried out in the investigation into previous generations. At the end of her itinerary, the final location visited by Plantagenet is the cemetery near the farm at Misserghin, site of the family tomb. She observes how cemeteries ‘demeurent le passage obligé et masochiste de tous les pieds-noirs effectuant leur pèlerinage de retour au pays’.<sup>487</sup> It is in this location, however, that Plantagenet reaffirms distance from restorative claims and attempts to establish an effectively completed form of *pied-noir* memory, detached from nostalgia. Roux’s narrator also proposes engagement with the full implications of the colonial past, as potential for a reconciliatory form develops through her approach to inherited connections to Algeria: ‘Ce Maghreb où je n’ai pas vécu, dont j’étais, dont je suis, je ne trouvais aucun inconvénient pour ma part à le rendre à qui de droit.’<sup>488</sup> The contextualization of influential politicized myths and the repositioning of *pied-noir* memory explored in these works suggest potential directions for further incorporation into a plural frame.

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<sup>487</sup> Plantagenet, *Trois jours à Oran*, pp. 164–5.

<sup>488</sup> Roux, *La Solitude de la fleur blanche*, p. 90.

## Chapter 4: Memories of Conflict and Legacies of Violence: French Military Veterans of the Algerian War of Independence

The condition of problematic engagement in France with the political and social legacies of the Algerian War has stemmed from the long-term absence of official recognition of the conflict since its end in 1962. In their categorization of what they identify as the multiple constituencies of memory of the conflict, Stora and Harbi observe the conditions in which silence and forms of repression of memory have prevailed: 'Dans la France actuelle, les groupes porteurs d'une mémoire enfouie se sont longtemps réfugiés dans le non-dit. La France, attentive à célébrer ses gloires, répugne à découvrir ses blessures.'<sup>489</sup> This reluctance to address the subject of the War and to examine the most troubling details of France's colonial past in Algeria has notably revolved around aspects of the way in which the conflict was fought and the prevalence of repressive measures, including the use of torture by French forces. A shift in official tone was signalled by the law passed in France in 1999 that approved the designation of 'guerre d'Algérie' and thus enabled a move beyond the previous cover of euphemistic reference to 'opérations effectuées en Afrique du Nord'.<sup>490</sup> The official adoption of this term and recognition of the conflict however also marked, as Sébastien Ledoux has demonstrated, a stage of French political actors catching up with a usage that has been common across society and relevant to a range of constituencies shaped by the consequences of decolonization.<sup>491</sup> Subsequent state-level engagements in France with legacies of the Algerian War have been manifested in a range of initiatives for official commemoration and physical sites of memory. While these forms of memorialization have supported

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<sup>489</sup> Stora and Harbi, 'La guerre d'Algérie: de la mémoire à l'Histoire', p. 10.

<sup>490</sup> Loi no 99-882 du 18 octobre 1999 relative à la substitution, à l'expression « aux opérations effectuées en Afrique du Nord », de l'expression « à la guerre d'Algérie ou aux combats en Tunisie et au Maroc », <<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000578132&categorieLien=id>> [accessed 6 July 2017].

<sup>491</sup> Sébastien Ledoux, *Le devoir de mémoire: une formule et son histoire* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2016), p. 196.

greater recognition of the conflict and its consequences for a range of groups, they have equally served to impose specific frames of reference for commemorative activity.

The focus of the present chapter is on contemporary literary representations of French veterans of the Algerian War, in particular those from a civilian population who served as conscripts or reservists. These men form a large constituency of memory that has long been characterized by a condition of silence. The profile of these men was also shaped significantly by the long-term absence of official recognition of the conflict or engagement with its legacies in France. Analysis of contemporary literary representations of conscript and reservist veterans will consider the context of a memorial landscape in contemporary France relating to the conflict. In the previous chapters of this thesis, assessments of developments in recent years of representations of collective memory among Harkis and *pieds-noirs* respectively have involved a survey of a memorial landscape that comprises multiple, contested sites of memory. The studies of both of these constituencies of memory have, moreover, involved analysis of contemporary literary texts by members of a younger generation raised in France. These texts present original critical approaches to evaluating an inherited connection to the colonial past as well as establishing, through employment of literary form, an effective sense of belonging in a contemporary French society struggling with its post-colonial status. In contrast to the other two constituencies, for whom connections between memory and spatiality are essential to effective mediation, the population of French conscript and reservist veterans is not rooted in geographical peripheries and specific localities but is, rather, present across France. A generational dynamic, moreover, is crucial to how these veterans are represented in contemporary France in forms of commemoration, as well as in the approaches towards the mediation and transmission of memory that are adopted in texts.

In the previous two chapters, analysis of literary representations of experiences of marginalization among Harkis and *piets-noirs* identified ongoing tensions related to the colonial past in contemporary French society. For both groups, this position arose from their resettlement from Algeria and experiences in France since 1962. The study by Todd Shepard of France's transformation into a post-colonial state through legal and political means has provided a significant reference for assessments of the ways in which official separation from the colonial past in Algeria took place.<sup>492</sup> For the constituency of conflict veterans on which the present chapter focuses, avoidance in France of the subject of the conflict after its end equally had the effect of eliminating any reference points with which to identify. In relation to details of the Algerian War, a succession of amnesty laws introduced in the years after 1962 contributed to a substantial structure of official forgetting.<sup>493</sup> While such mechanisms appeared to enable a rapid processing of decolonization in France, the fact of closure to the subject and its consequences remained, as Stora observes, a source of significant tension for those with a strong connection to the conflict and with often traumatic experiences: 'La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie va s'enkyter, comme à l'intérieur d'une forteresse invisible.'<sup>494</sup> For those who had served the French state in Algeria, including servicemen drawn from a civilian population, this internalization of memory led to a sense of isolation and lasting frustrations over limited connections to the past. In the present chapter, challenges to such a condition of closure are examined in the analysis of literary works that present, through their fictionalized portrayals of conscript and reservist veterans, critical perspectives on the transmission and mediation of memory of the Algerian War. The

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<sup>492</sup> Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, p. 98.

<sup>493</sup> See, for example, the 1966 law that established an amnesty for crimes committed during operations in Algeria: 'Loi n° 66-396 du 17 juin 1966 portant amnistie d'infractions contre la sûreté de l'Etat ou commises en relation avec les événements d'Algérie', <<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT00000050443>> [accessed 3 August 2016].

<sup>494</sup> Benjamin Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), pp. 214–5.



approach of the present chapter also involves assessing these texts in counterpoint to the physical sites of memory and official narratives regarding the conflict that have developed in recent years.

The connection between the veteran of the Algerian War and the place of remembrance of the conflict in French society at large is identified by Andrea Brazzoduro as crucial to the capacity for effective individual expression within a broader historical narrative: 'If veterans remain silent for a long time, this is precisely because French society does not want to listen to them.'<sup>495</sup> In more recent years in France, however, conditions have become more propitious to bearing witness and engaging with specific details of events of the conflict. Developments in engagement with the conflict and its legacies have been represented in measures such as the 1999 law, as well as in the proliferation of physical sites of memory. It is this climate of greater commemoration in France that informs the context of the production of literary works and the process of remembrance that they portray. In the three texts analysed in this chapter, each written by an author with personal and familial connections to the conflict, the portrayal of the veteran is set in France around four decades after the end of the conflict. The discussions of details of the conflict that take place represent a break with previous silence and, moreover, prompt reflections by characters on both the conditions in which collective repression had prevailed and the way in which a cover of silence is now found to be untenable. In *Des hommes* (2009) by Laurent Mauvignier, the sudden resurgence of memory of the conflict is narrated by a conscript veteran. The novel portrays his efforts to negotiate both a specific incident in the present and the broader tensions relating to the unresolved aspects of the Algerian War that are subsequently uncovered. Through this exploration

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<sup>495</sup> Andrea Brazzoduro, 'Postcolonial Memories of the Algerian War of Independence, 1955-2010: French Veterans and Contemporary France', in *France and the Mediterranean: International Relations, Culture and Politics*, ed. by Emmanuel Godin and Natalya Vince (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2012), pp. 275–303 (p. 277).

of the resurgence of memories of the conflict, Mauvignier represents the effects on an individual veteran of a condition of internalization of memory, of the sort identified by Stora. Over the course of the novel, a process of bearing witness is crucial to achieving clarity regarding details of the conflict and an effective settlement to persistent tensions. In the second novel on which the present chapter focuses, a sense of urgency to re-examine experiences of the Algerian War and their lasting effects in France in subsequent decades is also significant. *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bounoul* (2012) by Claire Tencin is narrated by the daughter of a former reservist. It presents her examination of the lasting effects of the trauma of her father's experiences in Algeria, as well as the fallout from the conflict that was experienced in the family home. Throughout the novel, the narrator occupies an investigatory role and pursues a process of working with her father's memory, which she has previously accessed only in fragments, in an effort to clarify his account and establish her own stable connection to a past to which she is unavoidably attached.

In both of these novels, the individual French veteran is portrayed in a damaged psychological state. Their condition results from the traumatic experience of conflict and the subsequent repression of memory after their return to France. Further anxiety and frustration are caused by the long-term lack of a clear means of expression with which to bear witness to their experiences. Where Mauvignier and Tencin present examinations of the traumatic experiences of French veterans of the Algerian War and the private tensions that surround individual memories of the conflict, the third text is also concerned with the potential contributions to be made by conflict veterans to reconciliatory dialogues and encounters with other groups. *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes...* (2002) by Maïssa Bey employs the form of a staged dialogue between three characters, each of whom represents a specific constituency of memory and possesses a distinct perspective on the afterlives of the conflict. The overlapping nature of memories

of events and lasting connections between France and Algeria among characters are emphasized in the text, which focuses on the essential plural quality of remembrance of the Algerian War. At its core is the exchange between a French former conscript and an Algerian woman whose father was killed during the war while in the custody of French forces. Across the varying forms and styles that these three texts employ, a consistent interest in questioning the effects of a long-term condition of internalization and repression of memory is present. Each work also portrays the efforts of protagonists to reinterpret experiences relating to the conflict and piece together details following the sudden resurgence of memory of events decades later. Beyond simply capturing the breaking of silence, moreover, all three texts also address the significance of processes of bearing witness and recovering individual memories as a basis for critical reflection on a broader structure in which the veteran of the Algerian War is situated.

The focus in this instance on generational dynamics and the transmission of memory enables an assessment of the changing state of reference to the conflict in France since 1962. If, in the aftermath of the Algerian War, its full implications were obscured in France by official silence and have met with only gradual developments in recognition, a strong degree of continuity to this condition of repression can also be traced from the way in which the conflict took hold and was represented by metropolitan authorities.

Martin Evans, for example, analyses how after the initial nationalist uprising in November 1954, the situation in Algeria gradually became a full-scale national crisis for France, with the first major increase in military activity marked by the recall of reservists in 1955.<sup>496</sup> This deployment signalled a step up in military engagement against the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) and followed the declaration by the French government of a state of emergency in Algeria. Sylvie Thénault highlights the significance for authorities in France of framing these measures as a specific security operation rather than as an

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<sup>496</sup> Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War*, p. 118.

official conflict: 'Y appliquer un état d'exception permet au contraire de répondre aux attentats tout en réaffirmant l'appartenance des trois départements d'Algérie à l'espace national français.'<sup>497</sup> This insistence on an internal matter also meant a continued refusal to recognize a nationalist cause or grounds for a separate status for Algeria. A further French escalation of the conflict came with the passing in 1956 of the special powers act.<sup>498</sup> This enabled the strengthening of repressive operations, in particular through the devolvement of police powers to military authorities, and established the extrajudicial conditions in which practices including torture could be employed and normalized. As Thénault notes regarding the French approach to the conflict and dominant political logic, this set of measures enabled the application of a series of exceptions to Algeria: 'Habilitant le gouvernement à agir par décret, sans consulter l'Assemblée, la loi donne à l'exécutif un contrôle direct et total de la situation, caractéristique du temps de guerre.'<sup>499</sup> While the maintenance of the separation of events in Algeria from metropolitan France was therefore sought, the deployment of large numbers of conscripts and reservists established a clear connection to the conflict for a French civilian population.

In her work of interviews with former conscripts and assessment of their status as bearers of memory, Claire Mauss-Copeaux considers the place of Frenchmen who served in the Algerian War and then returned to civilian life in a context of multiple constituencies and competing claims for recognition. Writing in 1998, Mauss-Copeaux observes how, on the subject of the conflict and those who served France, 'le tabou n'est pas encore levé'.<sup>500</sup> Where the law passed in 1999 marked belated official recognition of the state of war, the subsequent development of commemorative forms and normalization of reference to the conflict at a national level in France has also led to the

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<sup>497</sup> Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, p. 55.

<sup>498</sup> Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War*, p.155.

<sup>499</sup> Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, p. 58.

<sup>500</sup> Claire Mauss-Copeaux, *Appelés en Algérie: la parole confisquée* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1998), p. 9.

continuation of competition between interest groups for recognition. Most recently, the law introduced in 2012 under the Socialist government instituting a national day of commemoration on 19 March – the anniversary of the ceasefire resulting from the Evian accords – was positioned as a common reference point for a range of constituencies and covers both civilian and military victims.<sup>501</sup> As outlined in the previous chapter with the example of municipal politics of commemoration in Béziers, however, this particular date has also served as a focal point for competing political interests concerned with framing the significance of the end of the conflict and its implications for experiences since 1962. It is in this context of contested commemoration and a fragmented memorial landscape that the substantial range of localized physical sites of memory and independent forms of memorialization – largely driven by memory activist groups representing former combatants – are assessed here for their inscription of memory of the conflict into the public space. Prior to analysis of the three selected recent literary texts that portray individual French veterans of the Algerian War and their engagement in processes of recovering and mediating memory of the conflict and its afterlives, the next section will therefore establish a survey of memorialization in France.

### **Memorialization and Contested Commemoration**

Recent physical sites of memory and initiatives for commemoration have proposed renewed representations of the conflict and engagements with its significant lasting social and political legacies in France. In a study of developments in political engagement with details of France's colonial past, David Schalk notes the way in which several steps towards official, state-level recognition of the Algerian War were taken during the presidency of Jacques Chirac, leading up to the law passed in 1999 that imposed a shift in

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<sup>501</sup> Loi n° 2012-1361 du 6 décembre 2012 relative à la reconnaissance du 19 mars comme journée nationale du souvenir et de recueillement à la mémoire des victimes civiles et militaires de la guerre d'Algérie et des combats en Tunisie et au Maroc', <http://legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000026733612&categorieLien=id> [accessed 6 May 2016].

official designation of the conflict.<sup>502</sup> Where a gradual progression in the inscription of memory into the public space in France can therefore be identified, such developments in national commemoration have, as the present section examines, also involved the imposition of a partial frame of reference to the Algerian War. In the case of the Frenchmen who served in Algeria, and who were drawn primarily from a civilian population, greater recognition from the French state in recent years has also been marked by representations of the conflict involving limited contextualization of its specifically colonial dimensions. Chief among the initial measures which, as Schalk contends, governed the breaking of official silence and the taking of tentative steps towards formal recognition of the conflict was the memorial, erected in 1996 in the 19<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris, dedicated to ‘la mémoire des victimes civiles et militaires tombées en Afrique du Nord de 1952 à 1962’.<sup>503</sup> With a focus on the service of the generation of Frenchmen deployed to Algeria, the inauguration of the site by Chirac on 11 November 1996 made use of an existing structure of national military commemoration and symbolic reference points.<sup>504</sup> The incorporation of reference to France’s defeats in wars of decolonization into such a commemorative framework also notably involved valorization of details of the colonial past that were, according to Chirac, defended with an interest in national honour. The service of Frenchmen deployed as conscripts, moreover, was presented as part of an effort in vain to defend a French colonial presence and settler population. This was stated in Chirac’s declaration of the purpose of commemoration: ‘nous sommes là pour nous recueillir, pour honorer ces combattants qui ont donné leur vie pour la France, ainsi que ces hommes, ces

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<sup>502</sup> David L. Schalk, ‘Of Memories and Monuments: Paris and Algeria, Fréjus and Indochina’, *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, 28:2 (2002), 241–54 (p. 245).

<sup>503</sup> Jacques Chirac, ‘Allocution de M. Jacques Chirac, Président de la République, en l’honneur de la mémoire des victimes civiles et militaires tombées en Afrique du Nord de 1952 à 1962, à Paris le 11 novembre 1996’, 11 November 1996, <<http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/967017000.html>> [accessed 13 July 2016].

<sup>504</sup> Jacques Chirac se souvient de l’Afrique du Nord’, *Les Echos*, 12 November 1996, <[http://www.lesechos.fr/12/11/1996/LesEchos/17270-171-ECH\\_jacques-chirac-se-souvient-de-l-afrique-du-nord.htm#CuEmxTudhBVO3h3S.99](http://www.lesechos.fr/12/11/1996/LesEchos/17270-171-ECH_jacques-chirac-se-souvient-de-l-afrique-du-nord.htm#CuEmxTudhBVO3h3S.99)> [accessed 1 July 2016].

femmes qui sont morts sur une terre française, enrichie, cent trente années durant, par le travail de leurs parents.<sup>505</sup> The grounds for belated official acknowledgement of a conflict that had long been silenced in France were therefore established, yet the mobilization of memory of the colonial past involved the placing of emphasis throughout on the loss of Algeria, rather than a broader contextualization of events or clear connection to a post-colonial present.

Where this commemoration in 1996 involved the inscription of collective memory of aspects of the Algerian War and decolonization into the public space, the anchoring of reference to events through this physical memorial retained a military frame of reference and was focused primarily on the symbolism of ‘morts pour la France’. In his study of the French ‘monument aux morts’ and its status as a ‘lieu de mémoire’ – in the typology proposed by Pierre Nora – Antoine Prost identifies the role of commemorative ceremonies at such memorials as rituals concerned with the affirmation of Republican citizenship and belonging to the nation.<sup>506</sup> In relation to the specific context of the Algerian War, Chirac’s employment of a symbolic repertoire of this sort was highlighted by his reference to those who served in Algeria as ‘la troisième génération du feu’.<sup>507</sup> The parity of status with previous conflicts, specifically the two world wars, accorded to men involved in the Algerian War was therefore informed by an interest in normalization of their position. The breaking of official silence and the designation of Algeria veterans in this way is notable for having been driven by the personal connection to events held by Jacques Chirac.<sup>508</sup> As a member of this generation, Chirac’s interests in achieving greater

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<sup>505</sup> Chirac, ‘Allocution de M. Jacques Chirac, Président de la République, en l’honneur de la mémoire des victimes civiles et militaires tombées en Afrique du Nord de 1952 à 1962, à Paris le 11 novembre 1996’.

<sup>506</sup> Antoine Prost, ‘Les Monuments aux Morts’, in *Les Lieux de Mémoire, I: La République*, ed. by Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp. 195–225 (p. 215).

<sup>507</sup> Chirac, ‘Allocution de M. Jacques Chirac, Président de la République, en l’honneur de la mémoire des victimes civiles et militaires tombées en Afrique du Nord de 1952 à 1962, à Paris le 11 novembre 1996’.

<sup>508</sup> Raphaëlle Bacqué and Florence Beaugé, ‘Chirac l’Algérien’, *Le Monde*, 23 February 2003, <[http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2003/02/28/chirac-l-algerien\\_311119\\_1819218.html?xtmc=chirac\\_l\\_algerien&xtcr=297](http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2003/02/28/chirac-l-algerien_311119_1819218.html?xtmc=chirac_l_algerien&xtcr=297)> [accessed 18 October 2016].

recognition were motivated by a concern for justification of details of France's colonial involvement in Algeria. The presence across French society of large numbers of men who had served in Algeria in their youth has also, as Benjamin Stora notes, influenced political engagement and efforts at commemoration: 'Après Vichy et la Résistance, la "génération Algérie" se placera sur le devant de la scène politique française dans les années quatre-vingt et quatre-vingt-dix.'<sup>509</sup> The generational factor identified here by Stora is also significant to the present chapter, in particular for analysis of the ways in which representations of processes of bearing witness by veterans involve critical reflection on previous conditions of silence and the repression of memory. Assessments of recent texts that pursue effective forms for the mediation and transmission of memory therefore involves consideration of the prevailing limitations on expression in France with which protagonists seek to break.

The inauguration of the memorial in 1996 was framed by Chirac's cautious negotiation of reference to decolonization and a sense of loss for France that accompanied withdrawal from Algeria. His speech also identified directly the constituency of veterans of the conflict who have experienced a troubling and unresolved connection to the events in which they were involved. The persistence of tensions surrounding remembrance, however, stems from a long-term lack of recognition and absence of an effective means of expression of their experiences. In his 1996 speech, Chirac presented an evaluation of the scale of French military service in Algeria and noted how: 'La vie de ces jeunes gens en a été bouleversée, jusque dans sa réalité la plus ordinaire... De cette expérience-là, nul n'est revenu vraiment indemne. Près de trois millions d'hommes l'ont vécue, 25 000 ont disparu.'<sup>510</sup> Chirac's personal experiences of the conflict and his belonging to this 'troisième génération du feu' that served in Algeria has been a

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<sup>509</sup> Stora, *Le transfert d'une mémoire*, p. 37.

<sup>510</sup> Chirac, 'Allocution de M. Jacques Chirac, Président de la République, en l'honneur de la mémoire des victimes civiles et militaires tombées en Afrique du Nord de 1952 à 1962, à Paris le 11 novembre 1996'.



consistently significant influence on his investments in commemoration.<sup>511</sup> Alan Forrest also observes how, during the course of his presidency (from 1995 to 2007), Chirac ‘made something of a personal crusade of resurrecting the memory of those who died’.<sup>512</sup> The process pursued in commemorative policies of bringing remembrance of this generation’s service to greater prominence, however, was aligned with an interest in rehabilitating details of French colonial rule in Algeria. This tone is identifiable, for example, in his portrayal of the goal of the military service of these men and the emphasis on preservation of French control: ‘ils avaient rêvé sans doute d’une société plus fraternelle qui serait restée indissolublement liée à la France.’<sup>513</sup> This presentation of a uniform sense of purpose also contrasts with the often traumatic and repressed experiences of service in Algeria for French veterans that are represented in the literary works examined in the present chapter.

The condition of alienation that is identifiable as a consistent aspect of experiences for the French veteran of the Algerian War also relates to the overall visibility and degree of engagement in France with the conflict since 1962. Where the law that was passed in 1999 under the Socialist government instituted an official shift in designation of the conflict beyond previous euphemism and limited reference, the primary function of the adoption of the terminology of war was related to details of rights to military pensions and alignment of the status of veterans with other previous conflicts.<sup>514</sup> The broader implications of this measure are nonetheless identifiable in the direct intervention into a subject of collective memory and persistently contested events. In his study of the politics of memory and the trend of recourse to legislative measures in contemporary

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<sup>511</sup> Bacqué and Beaugé, ‘Chirac l’Algérien’.

<sup>512</sup> Forrest, *The Legacy of the French Revolutionary Wars*, p. 241.

<sup>513</sup> Chirac, ‘Allocution de M. Jacques Chirac, Président de la République, en l’honneur de la mémoire des victimes civiles et militaires tombées en Afrique du Nord de 1952 à 1962, à Paris le 11 novembre 1996’.

<sup>514</sup> Loi no 99-882 du 18 octobre 1999 relative à la substitution, à l’expression « aux opérations effectuées en Afrique du Nord », de l’expression « à la guerre d’Algérie ou aux combats en Tunisie et au Maroc », <<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000578132&categorieLien=id>> [accessed 6 May 2016].

France, Sébastien Ledoux examines the way in which official recognition of the conflict was framed in the 1999 law: 'La qualification législative de cet évènement qui a déchiré les Français est donc perçue comme l'instrument d'une réconciliation nationale.'<sup>515</sup> The definitive settlement that was intended by such a measure to fix a collective position in France regarding the Algerian War has, however, equally been followed by further developments in commemorative policy and the proliferation of multiple, competing claims. This role of political authorities in directing commemoration is also observed by Michel: 'la décolonisation (partielle) de la mémoire nationale conduit sous l'initiative de la gauche plurielle provoque par réaction une re-colonisation de la mémoire nationale sous le second mandat de J. Chirac' and the return of the right to a parliamentary majority in 2002.<sup>516</sup> As commemoration of the Algerian War therefore constitutes a political battleground, representation of specific constituencies of memory, including French conscript veterans, is also fought over.

As well as the growth in recognition of the Algerian War in France in recent years, developments in debate over the conflict and its legacies have also involved engagement with details of French military actions, particularly the use of torture against Algerians. Alongside this greater willingness from those involved to discuss the subject of torture and French military policies, broader engagement with the subject was also supported by advances in research and historiography. In particular, the work of Raphaëlle Branche has demonstrated the widespread use of torture during the war and its place within a repressive colonial system. For Branche, the employment of methods of torture during military operations therefore functioned as an extension of French attitudes to the control of colonial territory.<sup>517</sup> In the texts that are analysed here, forms of engagement with legacies of the conflict are informed significantly by understanding of French

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<sup>515</sup> Ledoux, *Le devoir de mémoire: une formule et son histoire*, p. 197.

<sup>516</sup> Michel, *Gouverner les mémoires*, p. 135.

<sup>517</sup> Branche, *La torture et l'armée pendant la guerre d'Algérie, 1954-1962*, p. 14.

military actions and the place of conscripts and reservists within this broad repressive structure. The way in which a fuller consideration of details of the conflict developed is also assessed by Paola Paissa, for whom engagement in France with the subject of torture took hold as part of a renewal of the climate of remembrance that occurred following official recognition, chiefly the 1999 law on designation of the conflict: ‘ce n’est peut-être pas un hasard si la reprise de la discussion se situe en juin 2000, quelques mois à peine après l’acte officiel de nomination de la guerre.’<sup>518</sup> The perspectives on the experiences of conflict veterans and individual processes of remembrance that are presented in each of the three texts are therefore situated within the context of a significant upsurge of engagement with these contentious subjects.

The significant competition between contrasting political positions in France for representation of the Algerian War and its legacies has led to the multiplication of commemorative forms. This is particularly the case with the successive stages of recognition of the conflict – following the memorial inaugurated in 1996 and the law passed in 1999 – and engagement with memories held across French society. In relation to the military legacy of the conflict and the specific constituency of French veterans, the project for a larger and more comprehensive memorial culminated in the inauguration by Chirac in 2002 of the *Mémorial national de la guerre d’Algérie des combats du Maroc et de la Tunisie*, located at Quai Branly in the 7th arrondissement of Paris.<sup>519</sup> Where, as Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard note, the first national memorial was located on the periphery of the capital and had been ‘installé dans l’anonymat’ upon its inauguration in 1996, the memorial site at the more central location of Quai Branly that was opened six years later received greater political backing and was, moreover, positioned as a definitive

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<sup>518</sup> Paola Paissa, ‘Le silence sur la torture pendant la guerre d’Algérie. Analyse d’un corpus de presse française (1957 et 2000)’, *Mots. Les langages du politique*, 103 (2013), 39–54 (p. 43).

<sup>519</sup> Mémorial de la guerre d’Algérie et des combats du Maroc et de la Tunisie, <<http://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/fr/memorial-national-de-la-guerre-dalgerie-et-des-combats-du-maroc-et-de-la-tunisie>> [accessed 14 September 2016].

form for the inscription of memory of the conflict into the public space: ‘C’est pourquoi la tentative suivante est vue comme une “seconde chance” d’être clairement visible par l’électorat, de s’inscrire dans le temps long, de fixer définitivement la mémoire nationale.’<sup>520</sup> This effort to set a definitive frame for commemoration nonetheless involved a strong degree of continuity from the previous site in terms of reference to the conflict and military service to France. Indeed, at the inauguration of the memorial, Chirac emphasized the effort to seal commemoration in a solemn register, with his stated intention ‘rendre l’hommage de la nation aux soldats morts pour la France en Afrique du Nord’.<sup>521</sup> Where the memorial therefore presents the names of all those killed serving France in the Algerian War (as well as in military operations against independence movements in Morocco and Tunisia), it involves a neutral tone of documentation. As Robert Aldrich notes: ‘The inscription is factual rather than emotional. The “memory” of soldiers is recorded rather than the “glory” or “honour” that they won on the battlefield or the “sacrifices” they made.’<sup>522</sup> The impact of the Algerian War on the population of metropolitan France is thus acknowledged in this memorial with the presentation of the extent of losses. Competition between varying political interests over the framing of the conflict has, however, continued with disputes over the establishment of further commemorations and memorials.

Although the status of the memorial located at Quai Branly as a reference point for national commemoration of the Algerian War resulted from a political initiative to expand upon official, state-level recognition, it is the contention of the present chapter that the site has become the focal point of a divided memorial landscape in France relating to the conflict. In their study of persistently fractious issues of memorialization

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<sup>520</sup> Bancel and Blanchard, *Une impossible politique muséale pour l’histoire coloniale?*, p. 139.

<sup>521</sup> Jacques Chirac, ‘Discours à l’occasion de l’inauguration du Mémorial national de la guerre d’Algérie des combats du Maroc et de la Tunisie’, 5 December 2002, <[http://www.jacqueschirac-asso.fr/archives-elysee.fr/elysee/elysee.fr/francais/interventions/discours\\_et\\_declarations/2002/decembre/fi001869.html](http://www.jacqueschirac-asso.fr/archives-elysee.fr/elysee/elysee.fr/francais/interventions/discours_et_declarations/2002/decembre/fi001869.html)> [accessed 1 July 2016].

<sup>522</sup> Aldrich, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France* p. 152.

of the colonial past in France, Bancel and Blanchard note the significance that was attached to the political orientation of the memorial site at Quai Branly during the process of its development: 'Ce monument charnière (dont l'idée première revient à Lionel Jospin) soldait pour Jacques Chirac et la droite le passé militaire de la colonisation.'<sup>523</sup> Since its inauguration by Chirac in 2002, furthermore, the site has received several additional layers of commemorative references and has been employed to serve varying accounts relating to the consequences of decolonization. Among those commemorated within this framework are Harkis and auxiliary troops, who are placed on an equivalent level as metropolitan servicemen as 'morts pour la France'.<sup>524</sup> This role accorded to the site and its framing of details of the colonial past was concentrated further with the introduction in 2003 of a national day of commemoration relating specifically to those 'morts pour la France' in North Africa.<sup>525</sup> The choice of this date – 5 December – is also notable for the fact that it refers only to the anniversary of the inauguration of the memorial and does not bear any symbolic connection to significant details of the Algerian War or decolonization.<sup>526</sup> The direction of commemoration developed under the Chirac presidency and right-wing governments was therefore characterized by this selective approach.

The accretion of layers of memorial reference at the Quai Branly site in recent years highlights its status as a battleground for the political framing of commemoration.

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<sup>523</sup> Bancel and Blanchard, 'Une impossible politique muséale pour l'histoire coloniale?', p. 139.

<sup>524</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter on Harki memory and narratives, the official recognition accorded to Harkis and the introduction, in 2003, of a specific national day of commemoration involved the incorporation of the names of servicemen into the Quai Branly memorial, but also maintained a relatively narrow focus on service to the nation.

<sup>525</sup> 'Décret n°2003-925 du 26 septembre 2003 instituant une journée nationale d'hommage aux "morts pour la France" pendant la guerre d'Algérie et les combats du Maroc et de la Tunisie, le 5 décembre de chaque année', <<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000797564>> [accessed 28 September 2016].

<sup>526</sup> The choice of this date for commemoration and its reference to the memorial itself can be identified, in particular, as an alternative avoiding 19 March – the anniversary of the Evian accords. On the debate that surrounded the choice of this commemorative date, see Jean-Dominique Merchet, 'Guerre d'Algérie, un jour qui ne fait pas date', *Libération*, 18 September 2003, <[http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2003/09/18/guerre-d-algerie-un-jour-qui-ne-fait-pas-date\\_445275](http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2003/09/18/guerre-d-algerie-un-jour-qui-ne-fait-pas-date_445275)> [accessed 23 September 2016].

Consequently, the development of a memorial landscape relating to the Algerian War and its legacies in France therefore necessarily involves the negotiation of multiple accounts and claims to remembrance without perpetuating a dynamic of competition. Similar divisions over memorial reference points are identified by Forsdick in a study of disputes in France over greater state recognition and commemoration of colonial slavery. In this instance, Forsdick notes, the choice of a commemorative date that refers only to the passing of legislation on recognition of the colonial past, and which thereby passes over other, historically symbolic references ‘risks a further evacuation of the past, becoming the site of a self-referential commemoration of a commemoration’.<sup>527</sup> In relation to the present study of commemoration of the Algerian War, recurrent political divisions are also identifiable as arising from the priorities given to specific references and strands of collective memory. Additions to the Quai Branly site and further investments in memorial forms also signal changes in the political direction in commemorative policies. For example, the law passed in 2012 under the Socialist parliamentary majority introduced an annual day of commemoration on 19 March – the date of the ceasefire in 1962 that followed the Evian accords and the start of the political process towards Algerian independence.<sup>528</sup> This measure, with its stated focus on plurality and a reconciliatory tone, was enforced most clearly by François Hollande in 2016. At a ceremony at the Quai Branly memorial he declared the purpose of the annual

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<sup>527</sup> Charles Forsdick, ‘Colonialism, Postcolonialism and the Cultures of Commemoration’, in *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World*, ed. by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), pp. 271–284 (p. 275). The law passed in France in 2001 recognized the slave trade as a crime against humanity proposed a renewed approach to the commemoration of slavery and its abolition: ‘Loi n° 2001-434 du 21 mai 2001 tendant à la reconnaissance de la traite et de l’esclavage en tant que crime contre l’humanité’, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000405369&categorieLien=id> [accessed 5 January 2017].

<sup>528</sup> Loi n° 2012-1361 du 6 décembre 2012 relative à la reconnaissance du 19 mars comme journée nationale du souvenir et de recueillement à la mémoire des victimes civiles et militaires de la guerre d’Algérie et des combats en Tunisie et au Maroc’, <http://legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000026733612&categorieLien=id> [accessed 6 May 2016].

date ‘honorer toutes les douleurs et de reconnaître toutes les souffrances’.<sup>529</sup> As this commemoration of 19 March therefore provided the latest incarnation of the national memorial and a reorientation towards a plural framework, it also highlighted the earlier uses of the site and sought to emphasize a contrast in tone from these preceding initiatives. As the following section will examine, the selection of symbolic reference points relevant to the constituency of military veterans and the mobilization of memory of the conflict also shapes disputes that have been played out repeatedly at local levels across France.<sup>530</sup>

### Localized Memory

The significance of 19 March as a commemorative date has been championed consistently by the *Fédération Nationale des Anciens Combattants en Algérie, Maroc et Tunisie* (FNACA), the largest group representing French veterans of the Algerian War.<sup>531</sup> The particular focus of their campaign for recognition and commemoration involves representing the interests of the constituency of conscripts drawn from a civilian population who were, as Sylvie Thénault explains, the largest category within the total number of Frenchmen deployed to Algeria: ‘À eux seuls, 1 179 523 appelés ont servi en Algérie, de 1954 à 1962.’<sup>532</sup> The focus on the anniversary of the ceasefire that led to the definitive French withdrawal from Algeria provides a clear reference point for commemorating the end of the military service fulfilled by these men. In the period of official silence and institutionalized forgetting that followed the conflict, this date also served as a focal point for the forms of remembrance carried out by the organization.

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<sup>529</sup> François Hollande, ‘Discours lors de la journée nationale du Souvenir Algérie-Maroc-Tunisie’, <<http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-lors-de-la-journee-nationale-du-souvenir-algerie-maroc-tunisie/>> [accessed 7 June 2016].

<sup>530</sup> Hélène Sallon, ‘Guerre d’Algérie, bataille mémorielle’, *Le Monde*, 16 March 2012, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/03/16/guerre-d-algerie-bataille-memorielle\\_1670682\\_3232.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/03/16/guerre-d-algerie-bataille-memorielle_1670682_3232.html)> [accessed 11 July 2016].

<sup>531</sup> Fédération Nationale des Anciens Combattants en Algérie, Maroc et Tunisie, <<http://www.fnaca.org/>> [accessed 30 June 2016].

<sup>532</sup> Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne*, p. 107.

The concern for achieving official recognition is also observed by Claude Liauzu, who, writing in 1990, identified the interests of memory activism by veterans of Algeria as being centred on incorporation into existing frameworks of military commemoration: 'La vocation de la FNACA est donc surtout de construire un discours de légitimation.'<sup>533</sup> The impact of long-term official silence in France has equally been posited by Stora as a factor that motivated the formation of veterans associations in the years after 1962. Stora notes a particular effort to establish a clear status for veterans and points of comparison with previous conflicts in the face of a common perception in French society that: 'La troisième génération du feu n'existe pas.'<sup>534</sup> Subsequent developments in political engagement, in particular with Chirac's designation of this generation's status, have motivated moves towards an officially sanctioned status and a place within commemorations for those who served in Algeria. The prominence of FNACA and its successes in pursuing the adoption of a clear collective memory in France of the Algerian War are therefore relevant to a major constituency of memory. The recognition achieved by this particular organization has also resulted from its mobilization of symbolic references to defence of the nation and alignment with existing forms of commemoration in France relating to previous major conflicts.

Strong attachment to 19 March as an annual date of commemoration has also led to its employment as a visible marker of the campaigning activities and political engagement of FNACA at local levels. Frederic Rouyard notes that efforts to inscribe this date for remembrance into public space – with its most common manifestation in street names – began as early as 1971 and provided a basis for the development of subsequent forms.<sup>535</sup>

The spread of inscriptions across France in this way has therefore been a crucial vector

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<sup>533</sup> Claude Liauzu, 'Le contingent entre silence et discours ancien combattant', in *La guerre d'Algérie et les Français*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Rioux (Paris: Fayard, 1990), pp. 509–516 (p. 512).

<sup>534</sup> Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli*, p. 266.

<sup>535</sup> Frédéric Rouyard, 'La bataille du 19 mars', in *La guerre d'Algérie et les Français*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Rioux (Paris: Fayard, 1990), pp. 545–52 (p. 548).



of the greater normalization of reference in France to the Algerian War, prior to the forms of official recognition and political engagement that have developed significantly in the past two decades. As Raphaëlle Branche observes of campaigning activities directed towards greater recognition by the French state, however, the achievement of a specific result often maintains a narrow focus and provides few details for connections between constituencies of memory or a shared reinterpretation of the Algerian War: 'Les pressions régulières des anciens combattants ont ainsi abouti à mettre l'accent sur la qualification des événements d'Algérie en "guerre", mais il s'agissait d'une guerre présentée dans la filiation des conflits auxquels auraient été confrontées les générations précédentes de français et pas d'une guerre coloniale.'<sup>536</sup> In addition to success in achieving recognition from the French state, the most visible result of this memory activism relating to former conscripts and reservists has been the inscription of reference to the Algerian War into public spaces across France. The proliferation of localized forms of commemoration and memorialization at municipal levels has also involved the widespread domestication of reference to the conflict and recognition of its impact on French society. The incorporation of memory of the conflict into existing memorials that honour French combatants of other wars can, however, equally lead to a simplification of references and avoidance of details of the colonial past. A particular challenge in this context therefore concerns engagement with the exceptional nature of the Algerian War and specific details of its status as a war of decolonization, with lasting social consequences in the former metropolitan centre.

Alongside the contested and often fragmented memorial landscape at a national level, localized sites of memory in France also serve as significant reference points for assessment of the developments in engagement with the conflict and recognition of the scale of French involvement. The growth in visibility of memorials relating to the

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<sup>536</sup> Branche, *La guerre d'Algérie: une histoire apaisée ?*, p. 102.

Algerian War is assessed by Aldrich in his survey of physical sites of memory and references to the colonial past in public space in France. He outlines, in particular, the increase since the 1990s of commemorative plaques dedicated to French servicemen killed in the Algerian War, most commonly focused on victims from a specific *département* or municipality.<sup>537</sup> The proliferation of localized forms of commemoration was addressed by Hollande in his speech in 2016 marking the annual 19 March commemoration, in which he acknowledged the significant extent to which, beyond the central location of the Quai Branly memorial, ‘la mémoire vit aussi à travers des monuments qui ont été édifiés’.<sup>538</sup> He singled out as an example of this commemorative activity the location in Sète (*département* of Hérault), ‘où a été bâti le mémorial en hommage aux Héraultais morts pour la France dans des combats d'Afrique du Nord et dans la guerre d'Algérie’.<sup>539</sup> The project for a memorial honouring specifically those from the *département* was pursued by a local organization and gained municipal support and funding, leading up to its inauguration in 2009.<sup>540</sup> This memorial in Sète is an exemplar of the dynamics of the planning and installation of sites that have developed in locations in France and which were acknowledged by Hollande as a form of commemoration that exists in counterpoint to the major Parisian site. With emphasis placed on the recently established legitimacy of the inscription of reference to the Algerian War in France, such memorials also seek a position within an established memorial landscape and draw on the symbolic factors highlighted by Prost surrounding the ‘monument aux morts.’ The greater visibility and prevalence of localized forms of commemoration also, however, points to an ongoing process of elaborating clear connections to the conflict and its incorporation into a plural collective memory.

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<sup>537</sup> Aldrich, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France*, p. 139.

<sup>538</sup> Hollande, ‘Discours lors de la journée nationale du Souvenir Algérie-Maroc-Tunisie’.

<sup>539</sup> Hollande, ‘Discours lors de la journée nationale du Souvenir Algérie-Maroc-Tunisie’.

<sup>540</sup> ‘Mémorial A.F.N Héraultais’, <<http://mémorial-afn-herault.fr/>> [accessed 23 September 2016].

## **Literary narratives and the mediation of memory**

The above survey of the memorial landscape in contemporary France relating to representation of military service in the Algerian War has demonstrated the major political dividing lines that govern the self-representation of conflict veterans. Across these physical sites of memory and initiatives for commemoration, the figure of the veteran of France's last colonial war is of consistent interest, both for their status as an individual bearer of memory and for their potential mobilization in relation to the continuing social and political afterlives of the conflict. The perspective of the private individual and their lasting connection to events in Algeria also, however, require effective mediation. The following sections of literary analysis will consider the ways in which testimony from individual veterans both provides clearer details of experiences of the Algerian War and motivates critical reflection on the long-term conditions in which silence and repression prevailed. In the narrative by Bey, for example, the portrayal of dialogue between the French conscript veteran and the Algerian woman whose father died at the hands of French forces is centred on the attempts by both characters to address a violent past. In particular, their conversation progresses towards examination of details of the use of torture in Algeria by the French military and the role of ordinary conscripts in the system of repressive violence. In the novels by Mauvignier and Tencin, conscript and reservist veterans are also represented engaging in efforts to reinterpret the traumatic experiences of their military service in Algeria. The breaking of silence by these men after decades of frustration over their inability to articulate memories of the conflict also motivates assessments by narrators of the ways in which the psychological damage incurred by individuals was exacerbated by a widespread condition in France of silence on the war and decolonization. The prevalence of unease in France at recognition of the

conflict has elsewhere been assessed by Iain Mossman, who, in a study of the televisual portrayal in France of conscripts during the period of the war, identified the framing of servicemen as ‘a liminal group caught in the interstices between generational perceptions of military service and their daily lived experience in a colonial war’.<sup>541</sup> The persistence, in the years since 1962, of such a peripheral status and problematic recognition for these men in France is also identified by protagonists in all three texts as a source of tension to be addressed and questioned.

As they were both participants in conflict and witnesses to violence, the French veterans of the Algerian War portrayed in these contemporary texts demonstrate difficulties of expression that are related to senses of shame and powerlessness. In her work interviewing former conscripts and examining a climate of silence in France since 1962, Mauss-Copeaux identifies how, in addition to their anxiety over a lack of reference points or bases for comparison with previous conflicts, veterans of the Algerian War felt an inability to transmit their memories even in the private sphere of the family: ‘Le récit de la guerre d’Algérie ne relie pas des générations entre elles.’<sup>542</sup> In the texts by Tencin and Bey, concerns for intergenerational relations motivate the approaches of narrators towards the effective mediation of memory and the clarification of details of a divisive past. It is equally the case for veterans, as explored in Mauvignier’s novel, that unresolved tensions related to experiences of the Algerian War are heightened by encounters with a post-colonial migrant population in France. The lack of discussion of the war that was encountered by demobilized men upon their return to civilian life also meant, as Jauffret notes, that memories of experiences in Algeria remained without a clear outlet or means of expression: ‘Les hommes-silence ne savent pas encore, en rentrant d’Algérie, qu’ils

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<sup>541</sup> Iain Mossman, ‘Conflicting Memories: Modernisation, Colonialism and the Algerian war *Appelés in Cinq colonnes à la une*’, in *France’s Colonial Legacies: Memory, Identity and Narrative*, ed. by Fiona Barclay (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 71–89 (p. 76).

<sup>542</sup> Mauss-Copeaux, *Appelés en Algérie: la parole confisquée*, p. 52.

sont des hommes-mémoire.<sup>543</sup> In addition to motivating the critical assessment by narrators of the means by which such repression of memory was maintained for decades, the processes of breaking individual silences that are portrayed in these texts provoke reflection among characters on the lasting effects on veterans and their families of avoidance of reference to the war. The turn to narrative by descendants of these men is also part of an effort to process memory fully and assess critically previous limitations of expression. All three texts seek to emphasize the status of these men as significant bearers of memory, rather than presenting veterans only as the victims of a social structure of collective forgetting in France. Through use of the narrative device of dialogue and representation of processes of bearing witness, full details of experiences of the conflict, including involvement in the use of torture and violent repressive measures by French forces are presented for examination.

Representations of the breaking of silence by veterans illustrate the development in recent years of conditions in France for engagement with legacies of the Algerian War. Where silence was identified by Mauss-Copeaux in her 1998 study as the predominant characteristic of individual conscript veterans, she also connects it directly to a broader, long-term absence of a means of collective expression or engagement with legacies of the conflict in French society: 'Effectivement, les traumatismes de la guerre sont douloureux et difficiles à évoquer, mais il ne faut oublier que le tabou qui pèse encore sur la guerre d'Algérie est un bâillon autrement plus efficace.'<sup>544</sup> In the examples of the memorial sites considered in the above survey, particularly those developed during the Chirac presidency, developments in commemoration of the Algerian War that accompanied the breaking of silence at official levels have involved acknowledgement of the generation of Frenchmen who served as conscripts. As also highlighted by the investments in the Quai

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<sup>543</sup> Jauffret, *La guerre d'Algérie: les combattants français et leur mémoire*, p. 220.

<sup>544</sup> Mauss-Copeaux, *Appelés en Algérie: la parole confisquée*, p. 58.

Branly memorial, however, support for commemoration has been motivated significantly by interests in the setting of specific parameters for reference to the colonial past. Such forms of official recognition and political involvement in commemoration have, Andrea Brazzoduro contends, nonetheless motivated the transmission of personal testimonies, meaning that a renewed willingness of veterans to speak about their experiences ‘can be explained by changes in the modalities, both individual and collective, which govern the organization of the memory’.<sup>545</sup> In each of the three texts under analysis here, the representations of the processes of breaking individual silence and bearing witness involve consideration not only of a personal unburdening but also the place of conflict veterans in contemporary French society and their interactions with other constituencies of memory.

While narrators in each of the texts present veterans as crucial sources of memory who are capable of critical reflection, rather than simply victims of circumstances, they nonetheless consider the strong influences on these men of formative experiences and environments. An investigatory role is particularly important to the narrator’s account in *Je suis un héros, j’ai jamais tué un bougnoul*, in which the daughter interprets details of the testimony that she had gathered from her father before his death. This account is set in contrast to the regular outbursts of anger and racist expressions that characterized the father, for whom service in Algeria was a defining influence on his character. As she examines how these tensions played out repeatedly in the family home during her upbringing in the years after the war, Tencin also considers the powerlessness experienced by her father and his belonging to a generation that she identifies as ‘les morts vivants qui sont rentrés sur le continent’.<sup>546</sup> Tencin’s characterization of her father’s sense of loss and disorientation indicates the profound psychological difficulties

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<sup>545</sup> Brazzoduro, ‘Postcolonial Memories of the Algerian War of Independence, 1955-2010: French Veterans and Contemporary France’, p. 287.

<sup>546</sup> Claire Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j’ai jamais tué un bougnoul* (Paris: Editions du Relief, 2012), p. 83.

that he faced in adjusting to life after the conflict. The unresolved connection to events that conflict veterans bear is also considered by Jo Stanley in her study of the condition of post-traumatic stress: 'Because of the memories they bring home, those who go through wars can, and often do, become involuntary walking memorials to that experience.'<sup>547</sup> In Mauvignier's portrayal of a conscript veteran, a sense of isolation and status as a social outcast is found to have been perpetuated by a lack of understanding from others and hesitancy over how to engage with the transformations in personality that arose from experiences of conflict. The manifestation of this crisis of remembrance in *Des hommes* is also noted by Raphaëlle Branche in her observation of how: 'Tout le livre semble reposer en effet sur le postulat que l'expérience algérienne du personnage principal du roman est la clé de son attitude ultérieure.'<sup>548</sup> The continued effects of traumatic experiences and untreated psychological wounds from the Algerian War that are considered in Mauvignier's novel, on which analysis focuses in the first instance, lead to a confrontation and exposure of unresolved tensions when details of memory emerge suddenly.

### **Laurent Mauvignier, *Des hommes***

Mauvignier's novel deals with the workings of processes of memory following the breaking of silence regarding the Algerian War. The novel is narrated by a French conscript veteran and charts his negotiation of repressed memory of the conflict as it resurfaces decades later. The recall of events in Algeria and consideration of long-term silence is prompted by the aggression shown by a fellow former conscript towards a North African immigrant neighbour. This incident exposes tensions that surround lasting legacies of the conflict and their place in metropolitan French society. These problematic

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<sup>547</sup> Jo Stanley, 'Involuntary Commemorations: Post-traumatic stress disorder and its relationship to war commemoration', in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, ed. by T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 240–259 (p. 240).

<sup>548</sup> Raphaëlle Branche, 'Des Hommes', *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire: Norbert Elias et le 20<sup>e</sup> siècle: le processus de civilisation à l'épreuve*, 106 (2010), 249–50 (p. 249).

legacies are equally the subject of the reflections that are provoked in the narrator and inform the investigation into the fallout from the specific set of events in the present. The difficulties of dealing with silence and the resurgence of unresolved details of experiences of the Algerian War has also been identified by Mauvignier as an influence on his style in this novel. His own father served in Algeria as a conscript and never recounted his experiences fully before his death.<sup>549</sup> Addressing the conditions in which repression and avoidance of reference to the conflict prevailed is therefore significant to the form that is employed.

The portrayal in *Des hommes* of an individual veteran dealing with the breaking of silence engages with a significant generational dynamic and assesses the factors by which a persistently uncertain position in French society was experienced by men who had fulfilled their obligations of service in Algeria and returned to civilian life. As Augustin Barbara finds, in representing the attempt by a conscript veteran to negotiate memories of violence and their contemporary manifestations, ‘Mauvignier essaie de relier la cause à l’effet, de montrer comment, quarante ans après, la mémoire des violences de la guerre émerge et perturbe ceux qui les ont vécues’.<sup>550</sup> The specific process of recovering memory that takes place is marked by its setting within an isolated community in provincial France and the intensity of the examination of details in the immediate fallout from the incident, after which memory resurfaces. The concentrated quality of the novel is also observed by Jean Duffy, who summarizes how ‘a twenty-four period covering a birthday-cum-retirement party and its aftermath provides the framework for the revelation of the horrifying memories and psychological scars still borne forty years on

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<sup>549</sup> Nelly Kapriélian, ‘Entretien avec Laurent Mauvignier’, *Les Inrockuptibles*, 8 September 2009, <[http://www.leseditionsdeminuit.fr/livre-Des\\_hommes-2617-1-1-0-1.html](http://www.leseditionsdeminuit.fr/livre-Des_hommes-2617-1-1-0-1.html)> [accessed 21 October 2016].

<sup>550</sup> Barbara, ‘Le roman et la mémoire difficile de la guerre d’Algérie’, p. 51.



by those who had served in the Algerian war'.<sup>551</sup> After the initial exposure of wounds, therefore, the concern for effective treatment involves a consideration by the narrator of the pathology of a condition of repression and the long-term absence in France of a means of effective reference to the Algerian War. Further to Duffy's indication of the period of time between the conflict and the resurgence of memory, the setting of the novel is dated by Déborah Lévy-Bertherat precisely to 2002.<sup>552</sup> As discussed above, this was a period following the official recognition of the conflict in 1999 in which commemoration and memorialization of the conflict developed rapidly in France. Analysis in the present section focuses on the portrayal of an individual experience of the resurgence of memories and the efforts of the narrator, named only as Rabut, to clarify his unresolved connections to the conflict.

In the opening section of the novel, the establishment of connections between characters and the unravelling of tensions stemming from the Algerian War is presented in the scene of a family gathering. In an interview on his engagement, through fiction, with memory in France of the conflict, Mauvignier has stated his interest in portraying individual responses to the emergence of details of a violent past and an intention to 'mettre des hommes en situation'.<sup>553</sup> For the narrator Rabut, the specific 'situation' encountered is the process of negotiation of his own memories of the conflict. His particular motivation to reassess these memories comes from his consideration of the tensions of a contemporary post-colonial society that are exposed by a racist outburst by a fellow conscript veteran, Bernard. Where all three of the works analysed in the present chapter portray responses to a sudden resurgence of memory of the Algerian War,

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<sup>551</sup> Jean H. Duffy, *Thresholds of Meaning: Passage, Ritual and Liminality in Contemporary French Narrative* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), p. 17.

<sup>552</sup> Déborah Lévy-Bertherat, 'Mensonge photographique et vérité romanesque: *Des Hommes* de Laurent Mauvignier', in *La littérature va- t'en guerre: Représentations fictionnelles de la guerre et du conflit dans les littératures contemporaines*, ed. by Maria João Reynaud, Maria de Fatima Outeirinho and José Domingues de Almeida (Porto: FLUP, 2013), pp. 3–17 (p. 5).

<sup>553</sup> Kapriélian, 'Entretien avec Laurent Mauvignier',

Mauvignier's text differs from those of Tencin and Bey due to the isolation of the narrator and his difficulty in finding an interlocutor. The absence of a representative of a younger generation who could aid the mediation and transmission of memory means that the protagonist remains affected by a limited means of individual expression. In addition to the specific timeframe and setting identified by Duffy as the main structuring device of the novel, the form employed by Mauvignier is marked throughout by the intensity of the process of recovery of memory and the self-examination that it provokes in Rabut. In the voice of the narrator, the engagement with the sudden breaking of silence and the subsequent effort of expression is charted in the forms of close description of details and sections of interior monologue. In the opening scene, for example, the description of the entry of Bernard (also known as 'Feu-de-Bois') is focused on details of his physical features: 'On l'appellera Feu-de-Bois depuis des années, et certains se souviendront qu'il y a un vrai prénom sous la crasse et l'odeur de vin, sous la négligence de ses soixante-trois ans.'<sup>554</sup> With this awareness of the physical distinction and form of stigma that he bears, the character of Bernard is assessed as an outcast and a troubling presence. It is equally understood that he underwent a negative transformation in personality, as Rabut recounts how: 'On se rappellera qu'il n'a pas toujours été ce type qui vit aux crochets des autres.'<sup>555</sup> The centrality of experiences in the Algerian War to this shift in character, furthermore, is brought to light by his strained relations with others in the community. In her study of Mauvignier's portrayal of the veteran's struggles to recount their experiences of the Algerian War, Cornelia Ruhe contends that the novel engages with 'une interdépendance très nette entre la mémoire officielle d'un pays et sa face cachée qui, fantastique, non codifiée, continue de le hanter'.<sup>556</sup> The effort by Rabut to deal with

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<sup>554</sup> Laurent Mauvignier, *Des hommes* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 2009), p. 11.

<sup>555</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 11.

<sup>556</sup> Cornelia Ruhe, "C'était pas Verdun, votre affaire". Alain Resnais et Laurent Mauvignier face aux traumatismes de la guerre d'Algérie', in *Guerre d'Algérie – Guerre d'indépendance: Regards littéraires croisés*, ed. by

the tensions provoked by the appearance of Bernard also involves a significant process of questioning the persistence of a deeply personal form of haunting and troubling memory.

This scene is described by Rabut in a tone of anxious reflection. After the initial introduction of Bernard and reference to his status as an outcast, the suspicion and unease of other guests leads to a confrontation. Bernard takes issue, specifically, with his neighbour Chefraoui, who migrated from North Africa with his family decades previously and is established in the community. For Rabut, the underlying motivations and implications of Bernard's aggression are immediately clear: 'Une chose comme ça, que je pense, qui vient se glisser et brouiller ce moment de notre histoire où tout à coup elle est là, comme un compte à régler vieux de quarante ans, un âge d'homme pour nous regarder et dire non, ce n'est pas fini, on croyait que c'était fini mais ce n'était pas fini.'<sup>557</sup>

Where the experience of civilian life since the return from Algeria is therefore characterized by silence, the way in which aspects of the conflict remain unfinished and are played out repeatedly in French society is also identified by Mauvignier as a significant influence on the perspective of the narrator: 'Dans l'inconscient collectif, il y a quelque chose de ce rejet de l'Algérien qui continue, parce que cette question n'a jamais été pensée dans sa globalité sur les cinquante dernières années. Ça devient un refoulé.'<sup>558</sup>

The repressed memories and long-silenced prejudices that resurface shape Bernard's actions in the immediate setting of this specific episode, but are also identified more generally as a key factor of his damaged character. At the centre of the confrontation with his North African neighbour is a racist outburst, which he claims as a release of tensions: 'Bougnoule. Des années que toi, j'ai envie de te dire. Je vais te dire. Et puis

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Birgit Mertz-Baumgartner and Beate Burtscher-Bechter (Würzburg : Königshausen & Neumann, 2013), pp. 49–62 (p. 50).

<sup>557</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 42.

<sup>558</sup> Kaprièlian, 'Entretien avec Laurent Mauvignier'

l'envie de te casser la gueule. Bougnoule.<sup>559</sup> After this verbal aggression that leads to his expulsion from the gathering, Bernard continues to the home of Chefraoui to harass his family. The subsequent investigation into this course of events also brings to prominence the questioning by Rabut of underlying tensions and the continued reluctance to engage with the details of experiences in Algeria of the generation of which he was a part. In this context, Mauvignier's portrayal of the experience for Rabut of the recovery of memory highlights the necessity of advancing beyond a condition of repression and towards clear acceptance and understanding in France of details of the conflict. This representation of the damaging effects on the individual of the absence of reference to the Algerian War provides a fictionalized example of conditions that contribute to what the sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel terms 'conspiracies of silence'.<sup>560</sup> These 'conspiracies' comprise a collective social endeavour to compartmentalize memory and avoid subjects that are nonetheless acknowledged privately and have a clear effect on individuals. In the specific context of memory of the Algerian War in France portrayed by Mauvignier, therefore, the sudden and violent way in which a collective silence is broken serves to motivate Rabut's assessment of conditions, as well as ways to negotiate memory more effectively.

In the aftermath of this incident and the investigation that ensues, the narrator's reflections are centred on his efforts to reconcile contemporary disputes and specific details of a long-silenced past. The frustration experienced in this regard by Rabut is also observed by Stéphane Chaudier who, in his assessment of characterization in Mauvignier's novel, contends that Rabut presents a consistently limited capacity for grasping the significance and implications of individual connections to legacies of the

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<sup>559</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 44.

<sup>560</sup> Eviatar Zerubavel, 'The Social Sound of Silence: Toward a Sociology of Denial', in *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Effrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 32–44 (p. 32).

Algerian War.<sup>561</sup> The narrator's sense of resignation to the resurgence of memory does not, however, make him wholly incapable of interpretation. In addition to his position as a measure of effects of the resurgence of memory of the conflict, Rabut also provides a connection between individuals in the immediate aftermath of the episode of Bernard's racist outburst. He describes, for example, how he is sought by the mayor and local *gendarmes* to aid their investigation into Bernard, as he is considered capable of explaining factors surrounding both immediate events and the longer-term tensions that are attributed to them: 'C'est moi qu'ils sont venus voir, moi, parce que je fais partie du conseil municipal d'abord, mais aussi parce que je suis membre des anciens d'Afrique du Nord et que je connais tout le monde ici, Chefraoui et sa femme, et puis, surtout, parce que je suis le cousin de Feu-de-Bois.'<sup>562</sup> Rabut's private reflections also develop in tension with the role that he is given of attempting to explain or contextualize Bernard's actions. His attempts to affirm connections to events and describe the sudden resurgence of his own memories in this context are, nonetheless, marked by forms of repetition and frustration, as he explains how 'j'ai ressenti en moi s'affaïsser, s'enliser, s'écraser toute une part de moi, seulement cachée ou calfeutrée, je ne sais pas, endormie, et cette fois comme dans un sursaut elle s'était réveillée.'<sup>563</sup> A sense of incompleteness and inability to explain his experiences to others is all the more troubling for Rabut in the immediate fallout from the incident involving Bernard and the reflections that it has stimulated. The difficulties of the narrator to broach the subject of the conflict are compounded by the lack of understanding and avoidance of the matter by neighbours and family. This portrayal of the persistence of silence is also observed by Carine Capone in her analysis of how Mauvignier's novel presents 'une sorte de mise en abyme de la parole interdite

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<sup>561</sup> Stéphane Chaudier, 'Laurent Mauvignier, *Des Hommes*: Qu'est-ce qu'un bon *Page Turner*?', *Relief*, 6:2 (2012), 28–44 (p. 34).

<sup>562</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 48.

<sup>563</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 77.

sur la Guerre d'Algérie.<sup>564</sup> In this way, the lifting of a long-term cover of silence forces the characters to evaluate the most effective way of progressing towards an exchange of memory between individuals. The reflections by Rabut portrayed in this section also offer a further literary representation of conditions of the sort that contribute to the 'conspiracies of silence' theorized by Zerubavel. It is equally in this section that Rabut's consideration of his return to civilian life leads to his renewed awareness of how avoidance of reference to the war was a dominant interest among men of his generation and influenced a form of collective self-censorship in which he engaged, as he describes how, in the years following the conflict: '...nous nous sommes remis à travailler pour ne plus y penser, et seulement reprendre la vie avec une drôle de frénésie.'<sup>565</sup> The remainder of the novel deals with the experiences that Rabut identifies as having been avoided for decades, as well as the untenable nature of such silencing and compartmentalization of memories of crucial formative experiences.

After the reflections by Rabut on a lasting malaise as a conscript veteran, stemming from service in Algeria and subsequent closure to discussion in France, the central section of the novel presents further details of his experiences of the conflict in the form of flashback. The change in setting in this section – from France to colonial Algeria at the height of the conflict – is also marked by a shift in the narration away from the perspective of Rabut towards a third-person voice. This part of the novel covers the experiences of Rabut alongside Bernard and other conscripts, and charts factors of the transformation of these men. The process of the recovery and reinterpretation of memory that is pursued by Rabut four decades later is therefore portrayed either side of this analeptic section. With this attention to the lasting consequences for individuals of memories of violence, the focus in the novel on the Algerian War is motivated primarily,

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<sup>564</sup> Carine Capone, 'À qui parler des silences? Une étude de *Des hommes*, de Laurent Mauvignier', *Revue critique de fiction française contemporaine*, 2 (2011), 39–51 (p. 43).

<sup>565</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 112.

as Lévy-Bertherat notes, by an interest in its aftermath: ‘L’auteur y pose un double parti-pris; d’une part, il n’écrit pas un roman historique, évitant les données temporelles et spatiales ou l’allusion à des figures réelles. D’autre part, il n’évoque la torture pratiquée par l’armée française qu’incidemment.’<sup>566</sup> In this portrayal by Mauvignier of the experiences of a group of conscripts that includes both Rabut and Bernard, tension is inherent in the awareness among the men that their experiences of service are to be compartmentalized and kept separate from life in metropolitan France, to where they will return as civilians. The portrayal of this condition involves accounts of the routine employment of violent and repressive measures, interspersed with ennui and an effort to avoid further action: ‘on voudrait que tout soit fini.’<sup>567</sup> The details of the conflict that are replayed in this section are also concerned with relations between individuals and, in particular, the basis of a dispute between Bernard and Rabut that is found to persist and cloud perceptions decades later. At the end of this section of vivid recollection of Algeria, the return to the present is marked by Rabut awaking, gripped by a process of remembrance to connect the actions of Bernard in both past and present: ‘il ne peut pas imaginer ce saut dans le temps et, à travers l’épaisseur des années, voir, ni même apercevoir cette nuit d’hiver où Rabut se réveille une fois encore en sursaut, parce que quelqu’un dans la journée aura dit le nom Algérie.’<sup>568</sup> While there is a particular sense of urgency to this remembering, provoked by the incident of the previous day, there are also routine aspects to this trauma experienced by Rabut, as in the description of how: ‘cette fois comme les autres, il se réveille, Rabut, les yeux grands ouverts...il faut supporter de voir encore devant soi défiler les images....’<sup>569</sup> As he faces the immediate prospect of further involvement in the investigation into Bernard, moreover, the

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<sup>566</sup> Lévy-Bertherat, ‘Mensonge photographique et vérité romanesque: *Des Hommes* de Laurent Mauvignier’, p. 5.

<sup>567</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 194.

<sup>568</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 224.

<sup>569</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, pp. 224–5.

introspection by Rabut in the latter stages of the text is driven by his interest in achieving an effective personal settlement with these recurrent memories.

Following the return to the present and the first-person in the voice of Rabut, a further process of examining memories of the Algerian War and the persistent tensions that surround them in France develops. The most effective aspects of Rabut's attempts at dealing with the memories that trouble him are found in his consideration of the broader context in which individual crises of remembrance occur. These reflections by Rabut stem from the exchanges with a neighbour and fellow conscript veteran, Février, that he recounts taking place a few years after their return from Algeria.<sup>570</sup> As well as sharing Rabut's sense of continued frustration over an unresolved connection to events, Février also highlights the lack of interest from others that he encountered as a veteran of the Algerian War returning to France: 'Bon, c'est toujours comme ça. Dans le bourg, des gars comme moi, il y en avait. L'Algérie, on n'en a jamais parlé.'<sup>571</sup> The portrayal by Mauvignier of the account given by Février in this instance involves further consideration of the closure to discussion of the War that the men encountered and the resulting confinement of their memories to an entirely private realm. The ways in which senses of alienation stemming from traumatic experiences in Algeria were followed by isolation in France, typified by the absence of any effective means of either individual or collective expression, has also been considered by Jauffret in his study of the condition of this generation of men: 'Cette génération est celle d'une multitude de solitudes dont personne ne veut assumer la responsabilité.'<sup>572</sup> In addition to the account of an individual burden of memory, Mauvignier's portrayal in this section of reflections on the re-adjustment to civilian life involves further questioning by these conscript veterans of the means by which silence on the subject of the war has persisted. The examination in the

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<sup>570</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 229.

<sup>571</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 232.

<sup>572</sup> Jauffret, *La guerre d'Algérie: les combattants français et leur mémoire*, p. 221.



novel of this condition and the absence of attentive listeners also provides a further fictional demonstration of the observation made by Zerubavel in his study of collective processes by which avoidance or denial of a subject is maintained: ‘what ultimately makes conspiracies of silence even more insidious is the underlying meta-silence, the fact that silence itself is never actually discussed among the conspirators.’<sup>573</sup> In the monologue that he delivers to Rabut as an attempt at unburdening, an example of avoidance of reference to the Algerian War is described by Février as having taken an immediate and lasting effect: ‘Et après, pendant des mois, quand vous êtes rentré chez vous, avait raconté Février, vous trouvez bizarre que personne ne vous demande rien.’<sup>574</sup> The way in which these men’s memories remained untapped thereby perpetuated their uncertainty and led to the sense of being in the permanently suspended and hesitant state that Rabut identifies.

The self-examination that Rabut carries out in this final section of the novel follows on from his intense recollection of the conflict and his response to the resurgence of memory. The way in which specific details of service in Algeria from four decades ago resurfaces also offers a portrayal of factors of post-traumatic stress, as assessed by Jo Stanley. The status of conflict veterans as victims of their memories results from an apparent lack of control and containment of connections to the past as they ‘submit to memory’s visits’.<sup>575</sup> In the case of Rabut, this recurrence is experienced through continual frustrations and a struggle for clarity, as he describes the conditions of an inescapable replaying of past details: ‘Et alors ça revient... alors qu’enfin on voudrait juste que la mémoire nous foute la paix et qu’elle nous laisse dormir.’<sup>576</sup> Where Rabut continues to attempt to negotiate traumatic memories, however, he is not totally passive in episodes

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<sup>573</sup> Zerubavel, ‘The Social Sound of Silence: Toward a Sociology of Denial’, p. 39.

<sup>574</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 247.

<sup>575</sup> Stanley, ‘Involuntary Commemorations: Post-traumatic stress disorder and its relationship to war commemoration’, p. 240.

<sup>576</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 255.

where the resurgence of memory appears overwhelming. In this latter section of the text, for example, his effort to seek a definitive individual resolution is driven by a concern to pin down details of memories that have remained fragmented and difficult to reassemble. This is evidenced in his repeated self-questioning: ‘Qu’est-ce qui m’a échappé? Qu’est-ce que je n’ai pas compris?’<sup>577</sup> Rabut’s turn, in this instance, to an archive of photographs that has long remained untouched informs his reflection on both the individual transformation that was brought about by service in Algeria and subsequent closure to discussion of the conflict. His assessment of remaining traces of the conflict throughout this section informs a focus on difficulties of the communication of memory, as, for example, surrounding the continued lack of openness with his family and wife and his effort to explain how: ‘on est marqué à vie par des images tellement atroces qu’on ne sait pas se les dire à soi-même.’<sup>578</sup> Overall, the portrayal by Mauvignier of the French conscript veteran as both a crucial source of memory and a psychologically damaged individual involves examination of the connections that they bear to events of the Algerian War, as well as the condition in which they encounter the limits of a capacity for expression and interpretation of their experiences.

Through characterization of the narrator, Rabut, as well as the antagonist Bernard, the representation by Mauvignier of the consequences of a break with a long-term condition of silence over the Algerian War leads to questioning throughout the novel of the status of these men as representatives of their generation and products of a climate in France of avoidance of reference to the conflict. The representation of the breaking of silence and recovery of memory developed in *Des hommes* present the personal reflections by Rabut as part of his efforts to negotiate details that had resurfaced suddenly and to achieve a definitive settlement with this troubling past. Mauvignier explains his style in the novel as

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<sup>577</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 255.

<sup>578</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 270.

being motivated by an interest in testing the ways in which literature can enable the examination of conditions that persisted in the absence of an effective means of expression, as with his contention that: 'Le roman, c'est l'art de reformuler les questions.'<sup>579</sup> Issues surrounding the establishment of a clear connection to memory of the Algerian War and a definitive settlement with lasting tensions arising from events are equally significant to the portrayal of the individual veteran in the novel by Tencin, on which analysis in the following section will focus. In contrast to Mauvignier's study of the French veteran as a sole interpreter of persistently tense and problematic memories, the portrayal in *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnol* of a former reservist soldier is driven by the efforts of the narrator to interact with her father and establish a clear account of his service in Algeria. In her study of the intergenerational transmission of memory and problematic inheritance experienced by the children of French veterans of the Algerian War, Florence Dosse identifies an important responsibility of mediation and interpretation to be fulfilled by representatives of a younger generation: 'Les enfants, qui n'ont vécu ni l'événement ni la période, ne peuvent qu'être dans une mémoire reconstituée, leur représentation de la guerre étant d'autant plus pétrie d'imaginaire que le silence a souvent prévalu autour d'eux.'<sup>580</sup> Tencin explains how the details of her relationship with her father have motivated her effort to address the lasting consequences of the Algerian War and its taboo status in France. She identifies an interest, based on her personal experience, in the way in which in the decades after 1962 'une guerre occultée, qui a eu lieu loin de la métropole s'invite dans les foyers français après coup.'<sup>581</sup> The clear transmission of memory that the narrator seeks to develop through the role of interlocutor and mediator is equally motivated by a concern for her

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<sup>579</sup> Kapriélian, 'Entretien avec Laurent Mauvignier'

<sup>580</sup> Florence Dosse, *Les héritiers du silence: Enfants d'appelés en Algérie* (Paris: Stock, 2012), p. 183.

<sup>581</sup> Hafida Seklaoui, 'Et si la guerre d'Algérie ne s'était pas terminée en 1962 ?', *Méditerranée*, 4 January 2013 <<http://www.mediterranee.com/0452013-et-si-la-guerre-dalgerie-ne-setait-pas-terminee-en-1962.html>> [accessed 26 October 2016].

inherited connection to the conflict. This issue of belonging is considered, in particular, through her exploration over the course of the text of the significance to her upbringing of her father's persistent anger, the result of unresolved traumatic experiences in Algeria. This leads to her evaluation of both the details of his military service and her relation to a broader context in France of decades of avoidance of reference to the conflict.

**Claire Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnol***

The approach to the transmission of memory that is developed by the narrator of Tencin's novel is concerned with evaluating her father's formative experiences alongside a consideration of the difficulties in expression that have persisted in France in relation to the subject of the Algerian War. The narrator also addresses the broader context of her father's experiences and his belonging to the generation of Frenchmen who were deployed to Algeria. The common perception among veterans of the Algerian War of occupying an unwanted position in France is highlighted by Benjamin Stora in his consideration of persistently limited expression for these men: 'Pour toute une génération d'hommes qui ont fait la guerre et rentrent d'Algérie, (ils sont plus de deux millions dans la société française) parler de "leur" guerre était, au mieux, inutile, et au pis douloureux.'<sup>582</sup> Aspects of such a condition of alienation are demonstrated in the portrayal of the father by Tencin's narrator, in particular through his claim to a lack of understanding from others. In considering the form of Tencin's text, analysis here is informed by the category proposed by Dominique Viart of the 'récit de filiation.' In contrast to the primary focus on the self that is presented in the genres of memoir and autobiography, this is a form of text that pursues 'une enquête sur l'*ascendance* du sujet.'<sup>583</sup> The motivation to investigate parental influences and forms of inheritance results from

<sup>582</sup> Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie*, p. 220.

<sup>583</sup> Dominique Viart, 'Le silence des pères au principe du "récit de filiation"', *Études françaises*, 45:3 (2009), 95–112 (p. 96).

anxieties felt by Tencin's narrator over identification with her father. In relation to the details of the Algerian War that she negotiates, the process of recovering memory and clarifying details of her father's experiences also involves assessing his character. The way in which she engages with the subject of the Algerian War equally demonstrates an aspect of the condition identified by Viart of a 'défaut de transmission.'<sup>584</sup> In attempting to overcome persistent limitations of the transmission of memory, the narrator's approach combines dialogue with her father and personal reflections on the conditions of her upbringing, which was shaped by unresolved connections to the conflict.

The declaration that gives the novel its title is the opening statement from the narrator's father. While the racist expression used is traced to tensions stemming from his experiences in Algeria, he is not an outcast like the character of Bernard portrayed in Mauvignier's novel. His claim for a distanced role in the conflict and apparent appeal for judgement serves as the basis for the narrator's investigation. This particular outburst by the father is described by the narrator as representing a sudden and definitive release of tension: 'Quelque chose avait lâché d'un coup, comme une corde de guitare usée, la colère s'était usée, quelque chose de plus important s'était imposé à lui, quelque chose de plus pressant que la colère.'<sup>585</sup> After this scene in the family home, the daughter pursues clarification of details of her father's experiences and their lasting effects. The accounts that she attempts to draw out in order to assess the implications of 'filiation' and inheritance from the father connect to her reflections on the exposure of the rest of the family to his trauma and anger. The narrator's assessment of this opening declaration as a form of cathartic release for her father is heightened by the fact that he died shortly afterwards: 'il lui avait fallu quarante ans pour pouvoir la prononcer, le temps d'une vie

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<sup>584</sup> Viart, 'Le silence des pères au principe du "récit de filiation"', p. 97.

<sup>585</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnoul*, pp. 8–9.

pour y réfléchir.<sup>586</sup> This shift motivates her sense of urgency to write and examine details. Further to Stora's study of the repression of memory among French veterans of the Algerian War, the frustration common to this generation of men is also identified by Florence Dosse as stemming from a perception of misunderstanding on the part of family members and an absence of attentive listeners: 'N'ayant trouvé ni exutoire ni auditoire, ils ont été incités à garder leurs émotions rentrées.'<sup>587</sup> As Tencin's narrator considers the effects on her father of the internalization of memories, however, evidence of his inability to express his experiences satisfactorily are found not in silence but in his regular and often inarticulate outbursts in the family home. She recalls, for example, 'ses éructations phénoménales, si fatigantes, si terrifiantes quand on était à table...'<sup>588</sup> As the daughter was on the receiving end of these expressions of anger, her examination of her father's character involves further consideration of the contributing factors to this condition. This is carried out, in particular, through her effort to get him to bear witness and listening to his accounts in order to contextualize his experiences.

Throughout the text, the assessment by the narrator of the details of her father's experiences that altered his character provokes consideration of her own upbringing in relation to the fallout from the Algerian War. She thus establishes from the outset an approach that involves piecing together and reinterpreting details, as in her claim to personal involvement: 'Ce n'est pas de la fiction. La guerre, je l'ai vécue à la maison, elle a sans doute commencé dès que je suis née en 1963.'<sup>589</sup> Her identification of the ways in which tensions arising from the conflict played out in metropolitan France is central to the condition of the father that she seeks to examine four decades later, with unmediated after-effects having been manifested in his episodes of anger: 'C'est cette guerre-là que

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<sup>586</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnoul*, p. 11.

<sup>587</sup> Dosse, *Les héritiers du silence: Enfants d'appelés en Algérie*, p. 83.

<sup>588</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnoul*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>589</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnoul*, p. 14.

j'ai vécue, cette guerre sur laquelle on ne pose pas de mots, parce qu'il n'y a pas vraiment d'histoire à raconter, qu'il n'y a pas de mémoire pour la raconter, qu'il n'y a que du bruit, la fanfare quotidienne.<sup>590</sup> While the narrator's focus is therefore on the way in which her father's persistent anger permeated family life, she also identifies a broader dynamic across France of 'les héritiers de la guerre qui n'avait pas encore de nom' and her belonging to a generation for whom the absence of full understanding of the conflict has shaped identity: 'dans notre sang a coulé la tristesse et l'oubli de nos pères.'<sup>591</sup> The significance that she attaches in this section of the text to a form of genetic inheritance serves as motivation for her process over the course of the investigation of her father. The examination of formative experiences that she carries out relates to features of the condition of 'postmemory' theorized by Hirsch as 'the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before.'<sup>592</sup> In the previous two chapters of this thesis, the issue of inherited trauma for descendants of Harkis and *pieds-noirs* has been related strongly to experiences of displacement, as well as the claims of victimization that are reassessed by representatives of a younger generation in recent texts. In relation to the present case of French military veterans of the Algerian War, issues of trauma and suffering that have arisen from experiences of conflict must be set in relation to a full understanding of involvement in violence and a responsibility for actions. The generation of descendants of French veterans to which the narrator identifies as belonging is therefore marked by uncertainty over the extent of connections to the conflict. Where Hirsch's concept of intergenerational relations posits a role of re-imagination to be performed by descendants on the basis of inherited memory and trauma, the process charted by Tencin's narrator demonstrates how the predicament of French veterans of the Algerian

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<sup>590</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 15.

<sup>591</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 17.

<sup>592</sup> Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', p. 106.

War provides few reference points with which the younger generation can engage. In relation to this specific condition and its effects of limiting the transmission of memory, the notion of “*mémoire seconde*” proposed by Dosse is significant to assessments of the often fragmented state of remembrance to be negotiated. The connection to her father considered by Tencin’s narrator offers an example of the factors of what Dosse identifies as ‘une mémoire à la fois héritée et métamorphosée, réappropriée, alors qu’il n’y a généralement pas eu, semble-t-il, volonté de faire comprendre.’<sup>593</sup> For Tencin’s narrator, a process of elucidating details of her father’s account and establishing significant facts of her inheritance leads to her assessment of the conditions in France that served to limit a means of expression.

The efforts of the narrator to clarify her perspective on a form of memory to which she is unavoidably attached through inheritance leads to her awareness of the way in which she acts on behalf of her father and works to assess critically the accounts that she obtains from him. She describes, for example, how in assessing his condition in the decades after the conflict: ‘J’écris pour lui, avec le souvenir qui tangué dans l’indécision, sans vérité ni histoire à raconter...Le silence des générations est un enfer.’<sup>594</sup> This approach to the recovery of memory has been explained by Tencin in an interview as being motivated by a consideration of how the generation of men of which her father was a part was shaped by a general climate of avoidance of reference to the conflict: ‘ils n’avaient pas les mots pour dire cette guerre’.<sup>595</sup> The role of the representative of a younger generation, as identified by the narrator, therefore involves drawing out individual memories of the father and assessing his experiences in the broader context of the conflict and its silencing in France. Rather than evaluate her father as a victim, however, this assessment considers influences on the perspective that he formed,

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<sup>593</sup> Dosse, *Les héritiers du silence*, p. 183.

<sup>594</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j’ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 18.

<sup>595</sup> Seklaoui, ‘Et si la guerre d’Algérie ne s’était pas terminée en 1962?’



alongside the factors that perpetuated his frustrated condition in the decades after the return to France. The particular outlet for his anger in his regular racist outbursts is considered by the narrator in relation to his apparent sense of powerlessness: 'il n'avait pas pu tuer un seul de ces sales bicots qu'il haïssait avec une certitude tenace qu'aucun argument n'avait pu déstabiliser, durant ces quarante années où il avait braillé sa haine.'<sup>596</sup> As the narrator assesses the impact of her father's declaration and considers the lasting connections to the Algerian War in France that he represents, she finds further motivation to force him to bear witness and to obtain clearer details of his experiences. In spite of the distance that he claims to have maintained from violence and the practice of torture during the conflict, the narrator's assessment of her father nonetheless remains stark in its take on his character, with a particular interest in formative experiences and influences on him. He thus represents an example of 'Un con français de sa génération, raciste et sexiste...'.<sup>597</sup> After this section of the text, in which the impact of the father's opening declaration is considered alongside an assessment of him as a product of his environment and the persistent mentalities in France derived from the Algerian War, a further process of obtaining details of his experiences develops through the conversations between father and daughter.

At the centre of the narrator's investigation into her father's time in Algeria is the series of interviews that she conducts with him in the period after his outburst and prior to his death. The recordings of their conversations also serve as a key source for the narrator's reflections after the father's death and is the reference point to which she turns in her considerations of filiation and inheritance. She describes her approach to the interview as involving an effort to force her father to bear witness and to elaborate upon the definitive settlement that he appeared to seek with his opening declaration of 'héros'

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<sup>596</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 12.

<sup>597</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 32.

status: 'J'étais venue avec l'idée que j'en tirerais quelque chose, une confession, des révélations...' <sup>598</sup> The consistent concern that she demonstrates to capture and examine details also involves a study of the factors that contributed to the distressed character of the father that dominated her upbringing. She is curious, above all, about the transformation in personality that her father underwent as she considers the fears of 'mon papa qui fut un autre homme avant la terreur dans le djebel.' <sup>599</sup> Her focus on the details of this transformation is informed by awareness of the lasting trauma that has resulted from exposure to violence and repressive actions, including practices of torture. The details that emerge from the interview also highlight the distance that her father had sought to maintain from his experiences in Algeria. She describes how, in pursuing her questioning: 'Je lui pose des questions, force les mots à sortir.' <sup>600</sup> As well as her interest in the manifestations of her father's trauma, the narrator's search for specific details regarding his service is also motivated by her effort to understand the tensions that played out for decades afterwards in the private environment of the family home. As with the crisis of remembrance and difficulty in articulating memory encountered by Rabut, the narrator of *Des hommes*, the anxiety experienced by the narrator's father in Tencin's novel is connected to a broader condition for the generation of which he is a member. Over the course of the narrator's process of negotiating the tensions that stem from the fallout in France from the Algerian War, the frustration that she encounters regarding difficulties of expression is also manifested in her sense of shame regarding connections to the conflict. She expresses, for example, the confusing mix of emotions over the relation with her father and the significance of his damaged personality: 'J'ai eu honte de lui. Honte de ce père que j'aimais malgré lui et contre lui...' <sup>601</sup> The perspective of the narrator portrayed by Tencin in this section demonstrates another aspect of the

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<sup>598</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 19.

<sup>599</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 59.

<sup>600</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 64.

<sup>601</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 60.

literary form theorized by Viart, namely his contention that ‘la honte est constitutive du récit de filiation.’<sup>602</sup> In the specific context of the fallout from the Algerian War that the narrator negotiates, a sense of shame is also shared between father and daughter and is rooted in their common frustration regarding difficulties of expression on the subject of the conflict. The negotiation of these emotions also informs her perception of a sense of loss, as in her claim that: ‘La guerre d’Algérie m’a dérobé un père.’<sup>603</sup> The assessment of him that she carries out therefore involves critical engagement with the conditions and circumstances in which he was shaped.

The process that the narrator pursues of getting her father to bear witness to his service in Algeria is intended to establish details that would aid an assessment of the impact of traumatic experiences on his subsequent character, marked by bitterness and anger. In addition to the format of the interviews that she carries out, a further aspect of the narrator’s efforts to find an effective means of the transmission of memory develops when her father entrusts to her his diary of the period covering his mobilization to Algeria. The use of this document as a source of background detail by the narrator, alongside her own reflections, serves to inform her significantly in her process of developing a clearer account. The father’s diary equally makes the narrator aware of the connections with her own account, and the contribution to their dialogue made by her father. She describes her experience of how: ‘J’écris sous la dictée, la suite du journal du soldat inconnu, mon père.’<sup>604</sup> On the basis of the repeated claims to the peripheral position in conflict that he declares in his account, the narrator identifies herself as ‘orgueilleuse de la lâcheté de mon père...un homme exemplaire avant de devenir un père arbitraire.’<sup>605</sup> She identifies the consistent internalization and reluctance to engage directly

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<sup>602</sup> Viart, ‘Le silence des pères au principe du “récit de filiation”, p. 105.

<sup>603</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j’ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 61.

<sup>604</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j’ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 97.

<sup>605</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j’ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 99.

with the subject of the conflict in the lack of a broader supporting framework for expression. The absence of support and the sense of a burden of memory is identified by Mauss-Copeaux, in her 1998 study of the condition of remembrance for French veterans of the Algerian War, as an influential factor in the limited discussion of violence and torture: 'Exécutants ou témoins des sévices accomplis au nom de la France, ils sont seuls à en assumer la responsabilité.'<sup>606</sup> The reflections carried out by Tencin's narrator, however, take place in a context of subsequent breaking of silence and greater engagement in France with details of the conflict. She describes, in particular, a shift in her perspective motivated by another source, namely the documentary film *L'ennemi intime* by Patrick Rotman.<sup>607</sup> In this film, first broadcast on French television in 2002 on the fortieth anniversary of the end of the conflict, testimonies from former servicemen featured admission of the common usage of repressive measures and involvement in torture.<sup>608</sup> This source motivates the narrator to carry out further reassessment of her father and the full implications of his relation to the systematic violence employed in Algeria by French forces. Where his claim to have been present yet passive during the conflict appears as his distinctive experience of service, this is reconsidered for the complicity that it reveals: 'Mon père a assisté aux tortures, il le dit. Assisté passivement, ça me paraît tout simplement un déni.'<sup>609</sup> On the basis of this reflection, the narrator also assesses the relation of her father to forms of repression of memory and dissociation experienced by the generation of which he was a part.

The investigatory approach that is adopted by the narrator throughout the account is motivated by the shift that occurs in her father's attitude and his new-found willingness

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<sup>606</sup> Mauss-Copeaux, *Appelés en Algérie: la parole confisquée*, p. 145.

<sup>607</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 100–1. *L'ennemi intime: Violences dans la guerre d'Algérie*, dir. by Patrick Rotman (France Télévisions Distribution, 2002).

<sup>608</sup> On the details of practices of torture and policies of the French military detailed in the film, see: Raphaëlle Branche, "'L'ennemi intime" de Patrick Rotman', *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 77 (Jan–Mar 2003), 116–118.

<sup>609</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnol*, p. 102.

to discuss his experiences of the Algerian War around four decades after the end of the conflict. Alongside the fictionalized portrayal by Mauvignier of the effects on an individual veteran of the resurgence of memory, Tencin's representation of the narrator's efforts to examine her father's condition involves her consideration of the conditions in which traces of the Algerian War have remained unresolved in France and have contributed to the persistence of tensions. The critical perspective possessed by the narrator in her assessment of the account given by her father is also aided by the fuller understanding that she acquires of the French military structure in which he was deployed. In the final stages of the text, the growth of the daughter's doubts over her father's apparent passivity during the conflict is also informed by her awareness of the distance that he sought from full reference to events or the elaboration of detail of his experiences in Algeria. His claim of distance from violence is therefore at the centre of the narrator's uncertainty over inheritance, as she unpicks the account that she has been given by him: 'Invraisemblable guerre de mon père.'<sup>610</sup> In addition to the generational distance that shapes the investigation into the transmission of memory over the course of the text, the narrator's reference to critical sources on the Algerian War – notably including Rotman's film of recorded testimonies on the subject of torture and repressive violence – aids her understanding of the details of French military actions in Algeria and, consequently, informs her reflections on her father's role. The sense of a strong yet unclear connection to events involving her father motivates her sense of urgency to investigate. She identifies, for example, her sensitivity to representations of the conflict, as in her claim that 'tout ce qui traite de la guerre d'Algérie est mon affaire, mon fonds de commerce affectif.'<sup>611</sup> The correspondence of Tencin's work to the form of the 'récit de filiation' theorized by Viart is furthermore demonstrated in the narrator's concern to achieve a stable connection to the continually influential status of her father. Her self-

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<sup>610</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnoul*, p. 100.

<sup>611</sup> Tencin, *Je suis un héros, j'ai jamais tué un bougnoul*, p. 100.

identification in relation to the afterlives in France of the Algerian War highlights the critical perspective that she employs with the benefit of distance from the events in question. Issues of inheritance and persistent difficulties of expression decades after the end of the conflict are likewise explored in the text by Bey, on which analysis will focus in the following section. In this case, the literary form that is effectively employed in response to a resurfacing of memory of the Algerian War involves the portrayal of dialogue between a French conscript veteran and the bearers of other, contrasting memories of the conflict.

### **Maïssa Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes...***

Bey's text presents a conversation between characters who each represent a different generation and perspective on the Algerian War and its legacies. The encounter between these individuals occurs within a specific, fixed environment and shapes the intense focus on the resurgence of memory of the conflict. At the centre of the text is the dialogue between a Frenchman who served in Algeria as a conscript and an Algerian woman whose father was killed during the War. While Bey presents a fictional encounter, her portrayal of the conversation between these individuals draws on her personal connection to events of the conflict, as her own father was tortured and killed by French forces in 1957 when she was six years old.<sup>612</sup> The inclusion of personal references into the form of a fictionalized account highlights what Siobhan McIlvanney identifies as Bey's use of a hybrid form. This occurs, for example, in Bey's paratextual inclusion of photographs and documentation relating to her father.<sup>613</sup> The examination, through the imagined dialogue, of details relating to the subject of torture and repressed memories of

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<sup>612</sup> Suzanne Ruta, 'The Rebel's Daughter: Algerian novelist Maïssa Bey', *The Women's Review of Books*, 23:4 (2006), 16–17.

<sup>613</sup> Siobhan McIlvanney, 'Fictionalising the Father in Maïssa Bey's *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes...*', *Hawwa*, 12 (2014), 195–220 (p. 198).

the Algerian War also motivates an investigation into persistent silences. The conversation between the man and the woman that develops over the course of the text notably involves reflection on unresolved details of the past, as well as a consideration of the intensity with which memory resurfaces decades after the events in question. In addition to the exchanges between these two individuals and their discovery of a shared connection to the conflict, reflections on the intergenerational transmission of memory are developed through the contributions of the third character, Marie, who is the granddaughter of a *pied-noir*. The importance that is placed in these characters' exchanges of establishing a form of stability in reference to contested memories is summarized by Névine El Nossery, who identifies how 'Bey casts the past as a persistent and pervasive intrusion on the present thus dramatizing the impossibility of repressing or truly forgetting past traumas.'<sup>614</sup> Here, analysis of Bey's text focuses on the portrayal of the French conscript veteran and his interaction with the Algerian woman in what both characters identify as a painful yet necessary process of addressing the past and exchanging memories.

The detail of Bey's personal connection to the Algerian War and her portrayal of a woman troubled by the unclear details of her father's death also connects her text to an aspect of the form of the 'récit de filiation' theorized by Viart. In particular, its combination of details of fiction and non-fiction relates to what Viart identifies as a central concern of the 'récit de filiation', in contrast to the form of the novel, for the pursuit of 'une enquête sur un objet singulier, par opposition à une richesse romanesque volontiers plus prolifique.'<sup>615</sup> The blurring of boundaries of genre by Bey that is highlighted by McIlvanney also has the effect of sharpening the focus of the text on an examination of both a deeply personal form of inheritance and connections to a broader

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<sup>614</sup> Névine El Nossery, 'The Fictionalisation of history in Maïssa Bey's *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes...*', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 21:2 (2016), 273–82.

<sup>615</sup> Viart, 'Le silence des pères au principe du "récit de filiation"', p. 107.

climate of remembrance. The portrayal of the staged encounter between three characters, who remain nameless throughout the text, is driven by an exploration of the breaking of silence and a subsequent process of attempting to make effective use of memory. The role of the Frenchman and the connections to the Algerian woman that he discovers are therefore crucial to the exchanges and eventual sharing of perspectives that take place. The characterization of the man is centred on the tension between the vivid nature of his process of remembrance and a struggle to broach the subject of the Algerian War or express himself effectively. In each of the texts analysed in the present chapter, a poetics of the breaking of silence and transmission of memory involves attention to generational dynamics, as well as concern for the conditions in which the recall of a traumatic past takes place. In the case of Rabut, the protagonist of *Des hommes*, Mauvignier's portrayal of an intense process of resurgence of individual memory was shaped by both a specific event that stimulated remembrance a fixed timeframe for the examination of details of an unresolved past. Equally, in Tencin's work, getting the father to bear witness and expand upon his experiences was crucial to the daughter's aim of gaining understanding of his lasting condition of solitude and frustration. In *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, the unities of time and place employed by Bey are crucial to the intense focus of dialogue and the process of exchange, as the action takes place within the compartment of a train carriage over the course of a journey from Paris to Marseille. As Susan Ireland notes, these features of Bey's text 'further reinforce the notion of an allegorical *buis clos* performance to be played out in the train.'<sup>616</sup> The role of the characters in this context also involves a significant form of mutual dependence for the achievement of a clear resolution and establishment of common ground of memory. The man, for example, is presented at the outset through the description given from the perspective of the Algerian woman seated opposite him: 'C'est un homme d'une soixantaine d'années, costume de lainage sombre,

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<sup>616</sup> Susan Ireland, 'The Algerian War Revisited', in *Memory, Empire, and Postcolonialism: Legacies of French Colonialism*, ed. by Alec G. Hargreaves (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 203–215 (p. 206).



chemise grise au col entrouvert.<sup>617</sup> The setting of this encounter decades after the Algerian War also highlights the perspectives held by the characters and the conditions required for a full confrontation with details of the past.

In the opening section, the setting of the scene of the encounter within the train carriage involves the presentation of the perspectives of the man and the woman, who are both deep in thought, in alternation. While they remain silent and do not openly acknowledge each other at this stage, their respective reflections are nonetheless stimulated by the presence of the other. After seeing the Algerian woman, for example, the man's thoughts turn quickly to his experiences of conflict decades previously, as he is absorbed in a flashback in which the subject of torture is central: 'pourquoi les voix de ces hommes reviennent-elles à ses oreilles, dans une effroyable stridence?'<sup>618</sup> This recall of his past in Algeria is presented initially as a sudden disturbance for the man, a doctor by profession, who is unsettled by the way in which memories resurface and are intensified by the presence of the woman opposite: 'Et dans le sillage de ce train qui traverse la nuit paisible, monte lentement... *Le bruit de la gégène, la manivelle qu'il faut tourner à main d'homme, ou actionner avec la pédale.*'<sup>619</sup> The development of these parallel strands of memory held by the man and the woman, and their gradual convergence, is central to the Bey's interest in working with details of a divisive past. The effect of progression over the course of the text is also traced by Ireland, who notes how 'the weaving together of the doctor's and the narrator's memories and the alternation between past and present and France and Algeria, creates the impression of intertwined history and a shared space of memory.'<sup>620</sup> In the first instance, however, the respective processes of reflection by the characters generate a sense of tension. At the same time that the man is dealing with this flashback

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<sup>617</sup> Maïssa Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes* (Paris: Editions de l'Aube, 2002), p. 9.

<sup>618</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 14.

<sup>619</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 16.

<sup>620</sup> Ireland, 'The Algerian War Revisited', p. 207.

to an episode of service in Algeria, for example, the woman seated opposite him is also gripped by her thoughts, which lead to her sense of unease: 'Elle ne se sent pas très bien. Le crissement du train qui ralentit de temps en temps agace ses dents comme le ferait un goût acide.'<sup>621</sup> Having identified the man primarily by his age – and therefore his presumed belonging to a generation of Frenchmen who served in the Algerian War – the woman's reflections remain fixed on matters of personal connections to events: 'Cette obsession...la question qu'elle se pose souvent lorsqu'elle se retrouve face à des hommes de cet âge, question qu'elle tente toujours de refouler.'<sup>622</sup> These troubling thoughts on potential links to the past also serve to heighten the woman's malaise. Where her observations in this section primarily involve private reflections on her father, the woman's appearance of unease also prompts the start of the conversation with the man, as he expresses concern and introduces himself as a doctor.<sup>623</sup> Following this interaction in the immediate present, a further unfolding develops with a rapid turn to discussion of Algeria. A further, sudden shift in tone is brought about when the man confirms the woman's private guess and refers to memory of Algeria from his time spent on military service: 'J'y ai passé dix-huit mois, j'étais appelé.'<sup>624</sup> Having made reference to the conflict, further inquiry into details of his experiences becomes necessary for both characters, as Bey portrays their sudden recall of details and motivations, in the presence of the other, to address repressed and compartmentalized subjects.

After this initial development of conversation and the shift in tone through direct reference to memory of the Algerian War, it is the conscript veteran who takes the initiative in the following stages of the discussion with the Algerian woman. Their dialogue nonetheless remains framed by their caution and hesitancy in addressing

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<sup>621</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 16.

<sup>622</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 17.

<sup>623</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 25.

<sup>624</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 32.

subjects and the discovery of further shared connections, specifically regarding the former conscript's links to the fate of the woman's father and the details of his death. The man's evocation of the location of his posting, for example, which is found to also be the birthplace of the woman, proves troubling: 'Elle sursaute, le souffle coupé.'<sup>625</sup> Through the style of omniscient narration, the technique of alternation between the thought processes of the individuals remains significant to the engagement with memory in this section. The man's reflections are presented in counterpoint to the continued uncertainty and nervous reactions of the woman faced with the sudden discovery of details and direct connections to a violent past. A move towards a clearer engagement with long-repressed memories also motivates the man's determination to open up on the subject of the conflict and seek clarification: 'Il a envie de parler. C'est la première fois. La première fois depuis...'<sup>626</sup> At the same time as the man's renewed focus and movement towards a potential moment of cathartic release, a sudden sense of catching up with details of the past, as well as a move from private reflections to open discussion, provokes unease for the woman: 'Elle a la tête prise dans un étau et des battements douloureux, lancinants, lui ébranlent les tempes.'<sup>627</sup> Overcoming this condition and regaining a sense of stability nonetheless requires her engagement with connections to the man and recognition of his status as a significant source of memory. In their study of Bey's form, Birgit Mertz-Baumgartner and Ricarda Bienbeck identify how the portrayal of the encounter between individuals who possess contrasting, yet overlapping, strands of memory of the Algerian War provokes consideration among the interlocutors of the lasting effects of traumas, as well as the fragmentation of memories. The examination, through this imagined dialogue, of the continued effects of afterlives of the conflict and the means by which tensions have persisted therefore constitutes 'un texte sur les

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<sup>625</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 37.

<sup>626</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 37.

<sup>627</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 39.

difficultés de se souvenir du passé et sur les impossibilités de sa (re)constitution.<sup>628</sup> As well as reflections on the ways in which details of the past resurface, this section of Bey's text also features a reference by the Algerian woman to the contrived nature of the encounter in the train carriage between individuals drawn from different constituencies of memory. This is particularly the case after the conversation draws in the third character, named as Marie, who is the granddaughter of a *pied-noir*. 'Et voilà! La boucle est bouclée!...Cela ressemble à un plateau télé, réuni pour une émission par des journalistes en quête de vérité, désireux de lever le voile pour faire la lumière sur "*le passé douloureux de la France*".<sup>629</sup> The form employed by Bey through the portrayal of this specific episode, however, involves dialogue that functions to test the conditions in which an effective plural engagement with memory of the conflict, beyond the statement of divisions or contrasts in perspective, can take place.

After the realization by the woman of the full implications of the encounter with the Frenchman for its connections to the fate of her father, dealing with this resurgence of memory and processing details effectively remains problematic: 'Elle n'ose pas prendre toute la mesure de ce qui est en train de se passer à cet instant.'<sup>630</sup> The desire for stability faced with the emerging details of memory requires further effective mediation, something that is explored through the developing relation between interlocutors. In her assessment of Bey's form and pursuit of a resolution to persistent memorial tensions, McIlvanney observes how: '*Entendez-vous*... is both an intensely personal yet collective account, in which discursive polyphony supports and validates the singular voice.'<sup>631</sup> As the dialogue throughout the course of the text involves consideration of the

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<sup>628</sup> Birgit Mertz-Baumgartner and Ricarda Bienbeck, 'Pour "une histoire à visage humain". La guerre d'Algérie dans l'œuvre de Maïssa Bey', in *Guerre d'Algérie – Guerre d'indépendance : Regards littéraires croisés*, ed. by Birgit Mertz-Baumgartner and Beate Burtscher-Bechter (Würzburg : Königshausen & Neumann, 2013), pp. 121–135 (p. 124).

<sup>629</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 40.

<sup>630</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 41.

<sup>631</sup> McIlvanney, 'Fictionalising the Father in Maïssa Bey's *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*...', p. 204.

interconnected nature of the characters' memories, the third-person narration also portrays the sense of the necessity felt by the man to continue with his reflections. Following the recognition of the connected and overlapping nature of their memories of conflict, the dialogue between the man and the woman in this section involves ever-greater sensitivity to their respective efforts to connect past and present: 'Il faut qu'il aille jusqu'au bout. Il faut qu'elle aussi aille jusqu'au bout. Rien ne lui semble plus important en cet instant.'<sup>632</sup> Further to her analysis of Bey's employment of an allegorical form that is concerned with establishing an effective and just framework for collective remembrance, Ireland also identifies the way in which the dialogue demonstrates gradual convergence of the interlocutors: 'At this point, the voyage into the past is presented as a joint enterprise with a common destination, as the two characters help each other to continue, even finishing each other's sentences.'<sup>633</sup> For the man, therefore, the intense process of remembrance that has been sparked by his encounter with the woman is framed above all by continued difficulties in articulating experiences and the effects of an isolated condition in which memory was confined. In the section in which discussion of specific aspects of the conflict, including the matter of torture that also concerns the woman, he is described as being at the limit of expression, even as the necessity of dealing with traumatic details is identified: 'Il semble chercher ses mots, avancer avec précaution, comme s'il était au bord d'un gouffre et qu'il lui fallait faire très attention pour ne pas perdre l'équilibre.'<sup>634</sup> The mediation and support that is required for the conscript veteran at this stage therefore involves attention to the long-term individual effects of silencing, which he continues to negotiate and which also frames his engagement with a broader, plural frame of memory of the Algerian War. The transformational effect of his experiences are, however, negotiated in this exchange:

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<sup>632</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 46.

<sup>633</sup> Ireland, 'The Algerian War Revisited', p. 208.

<sup>634</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 53.

‘Tout ce que je peux dire...c’est cette guerre, ces quelques mois, qui ont déterminé ma vie, qui en ont changé le cours.’<sup>635</sup> His correspondence to the status of French veterans of the Algerian War, identified at the outset of the present chapter, as both participants in conflict and witness to the subsequent repression of remembrance in France also means that the man remains concerned with the achievement of a definitive settlement to lasting tensions and a form of accommodation of traumatic memory.

## Conclusion

In *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, the examination of the workings of individual memories of the Algerian War and lasting connections to violence across France and Algeria has involved setting the account of a French former conscript in direct interaction with the perspective of the daughter of a victim of torture during the War. The portrayal of this encounter has served Bey’s exploration of an essential plural quality of memory of the conflict, as well as negotiating the lasting effects of silencing and limited reference to events decades later. In each of the three texts that have been analysed here, the representation of the French veteran of the Algerian War as a psychologically damaged individual has involved consideration of their consistent frustrations that arise from the lack of a clear frame of reference or means of expression. The processes of the recovery of memory that take place in the texts are also marked by their intensity and efforts to connect individual experiences to a broader condition of engagement with the legacies of the conflict. In the case of Mauvignier’s novel, the crisis of remembrance experienced by the protagonist Rabut after the specific episode that

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<sup>635</sup> Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*, p. 58.

brought tensions and memories relating to the Algerian War back to the surface stimulates his reflections on an ongoing trauma. At the end of the specific timeframe portrayed in the text, Rabut's anxiety over further confrontation with details of his past provokes his thoughts on a condition of stasis that has left him unable to communicate his experiences, as he considers 'nos fantômes, qui s'accumulent et forment les pierres d'une drôle de maison dans laquelle on s'enferme tout seul...ce passé qui fabrique des pierres, et les pierres des murs.'<sup>636</sup> The transformation in character undergone by individual Frenchmen following their service in Algeria and a condition of generalized repression or avoidance of the subject in France is also central to the assessments by narrators and representatives of a younger generation of the tensions that are exposed decades later in the period of the eventual breaking of silence. Alongside the concerns for intergenerational relations and the transmission of memory that shape the approaches pursued in the three texts, the relation of these works to a context in France of a shifting climate of recognition and remembrance of the Algerian War is crucial to assessment of the forms of mediation that they pursue. In his study of the experiences of the generation of Frenchmen who served in the Algerian War and who remain present across France, Jauffret identifies a significant condition of fragmentation to be negotiated in relation to their status as a constituency of memory: 'Plutôt qu'une guerre d'Algérie, il faudrait en effet évoquer des guerres d'Algérie, qui se perpétuent encore dans les oppositions de mémoires et de blessures morales et psychiques jamais refermées.'<sup>637</sup> In relation to the memorial landscape and political initiatives for commemoration of French military service in the Algerian War that were surveyed in the first half of the present chapter, these contemporary texts establish critical forms of reflection on the ways in which tensions surrounding memory of the conflict continue to play out. Through their portrayal of processes of bearing witness by former conscripts and reservists, above all,

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<sup>636</sup> Mauvignier, *Des hommes*, p. 272.

<sup>637</sup> Jauffret, *La guerre d'Algérie: les combattants français et leur mémoire*, p. 11.

the strategies of remembrance that these texts conceptualize are concerned with clarifying the position of the memory of conflict that is held by a significant population group.



## Conclusion

This thesis has analysed a corpus of literary texts published in France between 2002 and 2014 and has assessed the ways in which they present significant new approaches towards the mediation of memories of the Algerian War of Independence. While textual analysis has elucidated the original processes of remembrance that these works pursue, the study has also paid close attention to the surrounding political conditions at the time of their production and publication. As chapter 1 established in its survey of the relevant memorial landscape, the period between 2002 and 2014 featured a proliferation of initiatives for commemoration of both the conflict and the legacies of French colonialism. These developments did not, however, support the growth of consensus or lead to productive interactions between different constituencies of memory. This conclusion will summarize the findings of this study of contested spaces of memory and the persistent tensions in France that surround commemoration of the Algerian War, as well as the major themes that appear in all of the texts under analysis. It will also consider directions for further research and assess the continued relevance of literary narratives in a socio-political context of disputes in contemporary France over collective memory and negotiation of the afterlives of the conflict in Algeria, five and a half decades after its end.

Throughout this study of twenty-first-century literary narratives, reference to disputes over commemoration of the Algerian War of Independence has involved assessment of the fractious nature of debates in France. As the Introduction outlined, France has clearly advanced beyond the stage of repression in the ‘Algeria syndrome’ previously diagnosed by Donadey in 1996. While commemoration of the conflict is indeed more widespread and prominent in the public space than ever in France, the greater visibility of forms of collective remembrance has largely served to create new battlegrounds in

which competing claims to political representation play out. The conditions of the ‘guerre de mémoires’ of more recent years, moreover, relate to the ‘zero-sum’ contest between different interest groups identified by Rothberg in his study of memory in the public domain.<sup>638</sup> This makes the resolution of tensions between different groups all the more problematic. In a memorial landscape in contemporary France comprising physical sites of memory and commemorations of major anniversaries of the Algerian War, divisions have been exacerbated by the ways in which differing historical narratives relating to aspects of the conflict and its legacies are tied closely to party-political lines. As Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz have elsewhere identified, attempts to impose a specific direction or frame of reference have the effect of provoking further divisions: ‘In whatever guise it is manifest, the politics of memory is always overdetermined and unstable, the consequence of incessant human intervention.’<sup>639</sup> The continuing absence of a plurality of memories relating to the Algerian War and colonialism interrogated here stems from such a condition of political interventions, as well as imbalances in public representation between constituencies, who claim different interpretations of the events of the conflict and their consequences. In this context, literary texts that pursue processes of the mediation of memory are significant for the contrasts with this memorial landscape that they provide.

Chapter 1 demonstrated how the range of political involvement in collective memory has shaped processes of engagement with the details of the conflict and the implications of France’s status as a former colonial power. In his recent study of collective memory, David Rieff notes how acts of public remembrance are consistently informed by the prevailing political conditions of the period in which they take place: ‘the ghost at the

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<sup>638</sup> See Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, p. 3.

<sup>639</sup> Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, ‘Introduction: Mapping Memory’, in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. by Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York, Fordham University Press, 2010), pp. 1–9 (p. 2).

banquet of all public commemoration is always politics.’<sup>640</sup> As political interests and electoral concerns continue to shape the development of physical sites of memory and initiatives for commemoration, contemporary literary texts are all the more significant for the approaches towards the mediation of memories and the support for a broad, plural framework that they establish. As this thesis has explored in detail in its three main chapters, the particular value of the texts under analysis here resides in the way in which they do not simply revisit or reconstruct details of the past and thereby reinforce partial, group-specific accounts but, instead, present alternative interpretations of events and their lasting legacies.

### **Literary narratives and the treatment of afterlives**

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this thesis focused, in turn, on literary narratives representing three selected constituencies of memory – Harkis, *pieds-noirs*, and conscript and reservist veterans. All three of these groups were aligned with the defence of French colonial rule and the fight against Algerian nationalism. The authors of all of the texts are descendants of people who experienced the conflict and the fallout from Algerian independence in 1962, as well as the collective repression of memory and avoidance of reference to events in the following years. Textual analysis across these three chapters focused consistently on the ways in which narrators engage with afterlives of the conflict and reflect critically on their lasting effects. The critical perspectives of narrators are shaped by a generational dynamic, which informs their efforts to bring about a more effective means for the transmission of memory. In each of the three texts dealing with Harki memory, for example, the narrators are daughters who take on the responsibility of acting and speaking on behalf of their parents and are particularly concerned with the fate of their fathers. Investigations into family history and the experiences of previous generations are

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<sup>640</sup> David Rieff, *In Praise of Forgetting: Historical Memory and Its Ironies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 188.

also central to the efforts of narrators to clarify the transmission of memory in the two texts dealing with *pied-noir* experiences. In both of the works by Roux and by Plantagenet, narrators are concerned with their inherited connection to Algeria, as well as what they identify as the burden of the memory of the colonial settler population tied to their former territory. Resolving this tension involves questioning lasting grievances and working to support a plurality of memories and connections to Algeria in the present. In the three texts that portray the experiences of former conscripts and reservist veterans and their families, narrators focus on the burden of long-term silences in France and individual connections to the conflict that remain unresolved. As they represent renewed engagements with long-suppressed memories of the conflict and the breaking of silence by individuals, each of these texts features a narrator who questions the persistence of accounts of victimhood for specific groups.

In addition to their explorations of questions of memory and belonging in the present, the narrators of these texts consistently seek to establish effective means for the circulation and interaction of memories from across different constituencies. This is most clearly the case in the works that explore connections between memory and spatiality. For Kerchouche, for example, the visits to a series of camps in France and her journey to Algeria, where she discovers previously unknown family members, lead to greater clarity on the subject of Harki memory and the status of her father.<sup>641</sup> In Plantagenet's text, the narrator's meeting with the present Algerian inhabitants of the farm formerly owned by her family leads to a clearer and more positive reference to physical space with which to frame the *pied-noir* memory that she seeks to negotiate.<sup>642</sup> Across this corpus, moreover, narrators are concerned to place both their own experiences and the details of previous generations in a broader context. Bey's

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<sup>641</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 87–8.

<sup>642</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 197–9.

representation of a meeting between individuals who uncover overlapping histories and shared connections offers a further detailed exploration of the processes of revisiting the past and addressing often traumatic memories that are required in order to achieve clarity. The establishment of such connections is also a result of their efforts to treat afterlives of the Algerian War effectively and to recover memories that have not previously been expressed fully or clearly. In contrast to the political climate of commemoration in the period in which they were produced and published, moreover, narrators in each of these texts consistently seek to advance beyond the narrow confines of group-specific belonging and explore the development of a more open and plural form of collective memory. As the following section will consider further, the role of literary texts in exploring the conditions for achieving a clearer settlement with details of the conflict and the colonial past indicates the continued significance of narrative form as a counterpoint to a fractious memorial landscape in contemporary France.

### **Directions for future research**

Since the end of the period examined here, political debates over commemoration and collective memory have continued along well-established dividing lines. The criticism of French colonialism in Algeria made by Emmanuel Macron in February 2017, as discussed in the Introduction, signalled a stronger political tone on the subject than previously evident in France. He did not however follow up these comments, which he made during the presidential election campaign, beyond the immediate political row that they provoked. As the studies of political initiatives for physical sites of memory and commemorations throughout this thesis have demonstrated, electoral cycles often bring promises of engagements for different groups but little further substance in policy. The specific episode involving Macron indeed adhered to the conditions of the 'guerre de mémoires' surrounding legacies of colonialism in France. The main effect of the dispute

was the re-confirmation of existing political divisions on the subject and no effective change in policy ensued. Since his election as president in May 2017, Macron is yet to present any further advances in commemoration or policies supporting changes to collective memory. On another visit to Algeria in December 2017, he reiterated his interest in looking forwards, rather than being weighed down by the burden of the colonial past.<sup>643</sup> In his emphasis on the need for greater historical openness, as well as in his general support for positive French-Algerian relations in the present, Macron bears close similarities to his predecessor, François Hollande, who called for a ‘paix des mémoires’ between different constituencies.<sup>644</sup> The generational shift represented by Macron – who was born a decade and a half after the end of the conflict – does, however, indicate a contrast with previous leaders. For Stora, the more distanced perspective on events that Macron possesses also offers the opportunity of a break with the ‘rumination mémorielle perpétuelle’ of past years.<sup>645</sup> As this thesis has consistently considered through analysis of recent literary narratives, generational shifts can precipitate important changes in the negotiation of afterlives of the Algerian War, but they require further action to substantiate advances.

Where political battles over commemoration persist in France, literary narratives also continue to present significant engagements with memories and legacies of the Algerian War of Independence. As outlined in the Introduction, the increase in publication in recent years of literary texts dealing with aspects of the conflict has provided a wide range of new critical perspectives. In addition to the texts that this thesis has analysed,

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<sup>643</sup> ‘Emmanuel Macron en visite en Algérie, “dans l’état d’esprit d’un ami”’, *Le Monde*, 6 December 2017, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/emmanuel-macron/article/2017/12/06/emmanuel-macron-en-visite-en-algerie-dans-l-etat-d-esprit-d-un-ami\\_5225642\\_5008430.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/emmanuel-macron/article/2017/12/06/emmanuel-macron-en-visite-en-algerie-dans-l-etat-d-esprit-d-un-ami_5225642_5008430.html)> [accessed 12 December 2017].

<sup>644</sup> On the circularity of the politics of commemoration of the Algerian War in France in recent years, as well as the difficulty in achieving consensus on collective memory, see Rémi Dalisson, *Guerre d’Algérie, l’impossible commémoration* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2018).

<sup>645</sup> ‘Benjamin Stora: “Tourner la page avec l’Algérie est très très difficile”’, *France Inter*, 5 December 2017, <<https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/l-invite-de-7h50/l-invite-de-7h50-05-decembre-2017>> [accessed 12 December 2017].

another notable cluster of novels dealing with a range of aspects of the conflict and representing several constituencies of memory – including Harkis, *pieds-noirs* and conscript veterans - was published in France in the autumn of 2017.<sup>646</sup> As with the corpus of texts that this thesis has analysed and the range of relevant narratives published in France in recent years, these works share an interest in exploring long-term silences and conditions of the repression of memories.<sup>647</sup> The long-term effects of the conflict on former servicemen and their families, for example, are portrayed by Brigitte Giraud in *Un loup pour l'homme*.<sup>648</sup> The experiences of conscripts and the consequences of their service in Algeria on the rest of their lives are also explored in novels by Yves Bichet (*Indocile*) and Jean-Pierre Le Dantec (*Le disparu*).<sup>649</sup> *Pied-noir* memory is also represented in the novel by Jean-Marie Blas de Roblès (*Dans l'épaisseur de la chair*), in which the narrator investigates his father's experiences in Algeria and attempts to resolve intergenerational relations.<sup>650</sup>

Factors of intergenerational relations remain significant in these most recent works, as authors portray the efforts of individuals to develop effective means for the transmission of memory. In doing so, they also present stark differences from the political tensions that continue to characterize engagements with the colonial Algerian past in the public domain in France. For example, *L'art de perdre* by Alice Zeniter deals with Harki experiences and covers three generations of a family across France and Algeria.<sup>651</sup> In an interview in September 2017, Zeniter argued for the value of literature as a medium for

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<sup>646</sup> Valérie Marin La Meslée, 'Génération Zeniter', *Le Point*, 8 September 2017, <[http://www.lepoint.fr/livres/generation-zeniter-08-09-2017-2155491\\_37.php#](http://www.lepoint.fr/livres/generation-zeniter-08-09-2017-2155491_37.php#)> [accessed 13 November 2017].

<sup>647</sup> Sarah Belhadi, 'Auteurs algériens et non-dits de la guerre: l'Algérie s'invite dans la rentrée littéraire française', *TSA*, 6 September 2017, <<https://www.tsa-algerie.com/auteurs-algeriens-et-non-dits-de-la-guerre-lalgerie-sinvite-dans-la-rentree-litteraire-francaise/>> [accessed 13 November 2017].

<sup>648</sup> Brigitte Giraud, *Un loup pour l'homme* (Paris: Flammarion, 2017).

<sup>649</sup> Yves Bichet, *Indocile* (Paris: Mercure de France, 2017). Jean-Pierre Le Dantec, *Le Disparu* (Paris: Gallimard, 2017).

<sup>650</sup> Jean-Marie Blas de Roblès, *Dans l'épaisseur de la chair* (Paris: Zulma, 2017).

<sup>651</sup> Alice Zeniter, *L'art de perdre* (Paris: Flammarion, 2017).

exploring details of the past, in contrast to political representations and efforts to establish all-encompassing forms of collective memory: ‘La littérature permet de ne pas plaquer de grilles de lecture, mais de se nourrir de ce travail de connaissance “par en-dessous.”’<sup>652</sup> This novel and the other recent works mentioned above also portray individuals concerned with the breaking of silence and the transmission of memory in ways similar to the texts analysed in this thesis. Across different constituencies, investigations into the past and attempts to resolve intergenerational relations by individuals who have lived for decades weighed down by unresolved details of the Algerian War are crucial. Where all of these recent narratives portray individuals in contemporary France who explore familial and inherited connections to Algeria and conceptualize new approaches to the transmission of memory, they also share interests and approaches with authors of Algerian descent in France.<sup>653</sup> As this thesis has demonstrated through analysis of contemporary narratives that negotiate memories and the lasting fallout in France from the Algerian War of Independence, the consistent value of contemporary literary texts lies in the forms of critical reflection and exploration of new connections that they provide. As they seek to open up and explore further specific French-Algerian connections with the past, all of these narratives offer significant guidance on the effective uses of memory in the present.

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<sup>652</sup> “‘Le Monde’ remet son prix littéraire à Alice Zeniter pour ‘L’art de perdre’”, *Le Monde*, 6 September 2017, <[http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2017/09/06/le-monde-remet-son-prix-litteraire-a-alice-zeniter-pour-l-art-de-perdre\\_5181957\\_3260.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2017/09/06/le-monde-remet-son-prix-litteraire-a-alice-zeniter-pour-l-art-de-perdre_5181957_3260.html)> [accessed 6 October 2017].

<sup>653</sup> Examples of recent such recent works include the novels by Tassadit Imache, *Des cœurs lents* (Marseille: Agone, 2017) and Faïza Guène, *Un homme, ça ne pleure pas* (Paris: Fayard, 2014).



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